

THE TWINS A-VISITING



DOROTHY WHITEHILL





Janet came back, her arms full of bundles.

(Twins A-Visiting)

(Frontispiece)

THE TWINS A-VISITING

BY

DOROTHY WHITEHILL

Author of

"JANET, A TWIN," "PHYLLIS,
A TWIN," "THE TWINS'
WEDDING," ETC.

Illustrated by

JOHN M. FOSTER

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THE TWINS A-VISITING

CHAPTER I

JANET REMEMBERS

JANET sat on the window seat in the Enchanted Kingdom, a geography open before her. The Enchanted Kingdom needs a word to itself. It was the library of the house where Janet lived with her husband, Peter Gibbs, and her twin sister, Phyllis, and her husband, Geoffry Kedgerree, who was always called English. It had been at this house that Janet had met Peter when she was a lonely little girl before Tom, her big brother, had introduced her to her twin sister and Auntie Mogs Carter.

Much had happened since those days and Janet, with the geography open before her, began to think backwards. She traced her finger over the places they had been the summer before and lingered longest over Italy. Of course

Italy made her think of Miss Wicks and her charges, the roly-poly Mabel Southie; and that in turn made her think of David Channing. Then she went on to Winifred Crarer with her lovely auburn hair and impish eyes and the Howard sisters, Joan and Maud, who were remembered chiefly for having written so many postal cards.

Kit St. John, the favorite of the lot, fell into the canal in Venice and was dragged out by Count Mario Lorenzo. How exciting it all had been! That night in Florence when they had received the telegram from Sally Ladd and Daphne Hillis that they were coming to join the party, and then there was the never-to-be-forgotten meeting between Lorry Westlake and Jimmy Crosby after long months of separation, and the unexpected arrival of Chuck, and the embarrassing meeting in the railway carriage of Sally and Quentin Linden.

"What a lot of good friends we have," thought Janet, and her mind turned to the Westlake family and Helen and Ivan, and then down the years to Hilltop with Prue and Gladys and Ann. There was Sonya, too, whom they had picked up

off the street and reunited to her brother, Ivan, and little Hester and a crowd of others, never forgetting the summer at camp, and Judy and the Mettams and a crowd of boys at Tom's ranch, and the boys that Peter had brought home for the holidays. A goodly company in all and Janet felt happy in the memory of them.

What a good time they had had in England and now Sally was engaged and so was Daphne and they were to have a double wedding. At the thought of that Janet jumped up and went to the hall door to call Phyllis.

"Oh, Phyl," she sang out, "come here a minute."

"Can't do it," Phyllis replied from the kitchen, "I'm making bran muffins. You come here."

In a minute Janet stood beside her in the kitchen. A summer breeze, warm for this time of year, for it was only May, ruffled the green and white checkered curtains and the bowl of flour lay in a shaft of sunlight on the table.

"Biscuits again today!" exclaimed Janet. "How you spoil the boys!"

"I know, but they love them so, and Katie never can make them as light as I can."

"But Phyl, darling, I like pop-overs so much better," teased Janet.

"I know you do and I'll make them for you Sunday morning for breakfast," returned Phyllis, "that is, if I wake up in time."

"Good-bye, pops," laughed Janet, "I know you on Sunday morning, lazybones."

"What did you come in here to tell me?" demanded Phyllis. "That is so like you, Jan, you come in with something on your mind and then you forget all about it. What was it this time?"

"Let me see," replied Janet, provokingly, "it was something very important. Oh, yes, about Daphne and Sally. What shall we give them for wedding presents; and don't you think they ought to be alike?"

Phyllis stopped stirring the mixture in the bowl before her and considered the question.

"That's been puzzling me, too," she said. "I think whatever it is it should be from the twins instead of each sending something, don't you?"

"Oh, absolutely, from the twins," Janet replied, "together we stand and together we give wedding presents. But what? That is the question."

"Something Italian to remind them of our good times in Italy."

"Why not something French to remind them of our good times in France?"

"You would say that, and I suppose it's true; or why not something English to remind them of the glorious time we had in England?"

"I have it. Why not something American to remind them of the country we all love best?"

Janet solemnly waltzed Phyllis around the room.

"You have it," she said, "don't I always think of the right thing if you give me time? Something American it shall be, but what, O best beloved, what?"

"Jewelry?" asked Phyllis.

"That won't include the boys as well," Janet protested.

"Now then I have a brain wave," Phyllis announced. "Let the boys give to the boys and we can give to the girls."

"That settles it, but oh, what, what?"

"Patience, darling, and my massive brain will get to work and evolve a suitable gift; just give me time."

"But *tempus fugit*. We ought to go down next week and select the things. My word, what a lot of weddings we are having. There's Lorry and Jimmy, too, in the end of the summer, and we haven't given Ivan and Helen anything yet."

Phyllis put her hand to her forehead and left a white smudge across her face from her floury hands.

"We'll have to economize with all this gift giving," she laughed. "Well, goodness knows, I do my part saving the bread bills——"

"By making biscuits that cost twice as much," teased Janet.

Katie came into the room at this point and looked the disgust she felt.

"Are you making biscuits again, Miss Phyllis?" she asked dolefully. "Why people can't be content with God's own white bread instead of all these fussy extras I don't know." Katie always treated the girls as children. She had seen Janet grow up and had worked for Nan, Peter's adopted mother.

"It's all right, Katie," Phyllis replied meekly. "I'll just pop these into the oven and be out of your way in a minute."

Katie grumbled to herself and Phyllis, after she had shut the oven door, washed her hands and joined Janet.

"Let's take the steamer chairs out on the terrace and pretend we're on board a ship," she suggested.

"All right, but it will take an awful lot of pretending."

They dragged the chairs out and were comfortably dozing in the sun when the boys came up.

"I say, Peter," began English, "can't we find something for these two lazy girls to do? Here they've been sitting in the sun all morning while we've been toiling in the fields and I don't think it's square."

"Oh, very well," laughed Phyllis, "if that's the way you feel about it, you shan't have any of the fruits of my labor. White bread for you and Peter, while Jan and I devour bran muffins."

"Oh, pax, pax," cried English, "I have misjudged you, darling; do forgive me!"

"Old English means, do give me a bran muffin," teased Peter. "Now I know better than to call my angel lazy, I'll bet she's had every book

out of the Enchanted Kingdom and dusted it."

"Hummm," replied Janet. "Well, you go right on thinking so; it's a perfectly lovely thought."

Ellen made her tidy pink and white appearance. She was a little girl from the village whom they were training to be a waitress.

"Please, ma'am, luncheon is ready—I mean served, and Katie says to tell you the biscuits are burned."

"Oh, bother Katie," said English with sharp disappointment.

"And I hate white bread," grumbled Peter.

"Now had I been making them," laughed Janet.

"I completely forgot all about them," wailed Phyllis, and arm in arm they went into the dining room to find the biscuits a rich brown and not burned at all.

Katie had her sense of humor as well as the rest.

CHAPTER II

LORRY'S NEWS

JANET was on the top rung of the ladder dusting books, her hair was done up in a towel. She wore a big flowered cretonne apron and her hands were covered by rubber gloves.

She had just taken down a volume of Uncle Remus and, instead of dusting it, she had opened it at the Tar Baby and was chuckling over it with more delight than ever, for one never outgrows Uncle Remus.

The door burst open suddenly and Phyllis and Lorry entered.

"Such news," Phyllis exclaimed, "tell her, Lorry."

"Oh, it's not so very exciting," replied the Spartan Lorry; but she could hardly keep the tremble out of her voice as she said, "That is, to anybody except me."

"What nonsense, Lorry, I'm terribly thrilled over it, do tell Jan," Phyllis begged.

"Yes, do tell me," insisted Janet, "I'm crazy to know," and reluctantly she put the book back into the bookcase and straightened the entire shelfful before rising.

Lorry drew a long, shivery breath and then said all of a sudden:

"Jimmy's coming back next week. He's won a prize for the drawings for the capitol building of Greentown, and they gave him the whole job of all the decorations. We can be married and live there, and I guess that's all," she ended lamely.

"All," shouted Janet, "Why it's the most marvelous thing I ever heard. Have you told the family?"

"No, I just got the cable at the station, our telephone was broken and Cy Withers sent down word that there was a telegram there for me. Of course I thought it was from Judy or somebody, and took my time going for it and this is what I got."

Janet slid down the stepladder, "Come on; let's go tell the family," she exclaimed and with-

out even taking off her gloves she followed Phyllis to the waiting car.

They all piled into the front seat and Phyllis drove at breakneck speed.

Phyllis tooted the horn as they approached the Westlakes' place but, much to their surprise, no one appeared at the door. She stopped the car in the roadway by the side entrance, a door that lead into the living room. Janet opened it and was just going to shout the news when she almost stumbled over the boots of the Reverend Dr. Blake.

Mindful of her costume she said a hasty, "Excuse me, please," and went through the opposite door into the hall where she literally fell over Dodo and Di Westlake, who were shamelessly listening at the keyhole.

Before Janet had a chance to speak, she was followed by Phyllis and Lorry, who were in hysterics.

"I never saw anything so funny in my life," exploded Phyllis. "Dr. Blake wanted to know if you were masquerading and I told him you often dressed up that way to amuse yourself."

"Oh, Phyl, you never did," protested Janet.

"What were you two kids listening at the door for?" demanded Lorry.

"Oh, dear, you'll never guess," Dodo explained. "You see, Dr. Blake is here to try to get it out of Mother who set fire to the gas station, and Mother won't tell. They had quite an argument."

The summer before, when the girls had been abroad, they had received a letter telling them that Dr. Blake had sold some property, not knowing for what purpose it was to be used, and the new owner had put up a hideous gas station. There had been great indignation in the village and one night the gas station had gone up in flames, and only Auntie Mogs and Nan and Alice Westlake knew who had set fire to it and none of them would tell. The girls, of course, were crazy to find out who it was, and that is the reason that Di and Dodo had been listening shamelessly at the keyhole.

Lorry wouldn't tell her news until Alice could hear it, so they all waited breathlessly for Dr. Blake to take his departure.

At last the outer door slammed and once more the girls burst into the room and once more Janet

fell over the boots of Dr. Blake. Debby was in the room now, and that accounted for the slamming of the door.

"Oh, I beg your pardon; we thought you had gone," said Janet confusedly, and then there was a dead silence. Everybody was trying not to laugh.

"I've—I've just been dusting the books," Janet went on lamely. "That's the reason I have this thing on my head," she floundered on.

"Oh, yes, to be sure, quite, quite. I hadn't noticed it before," said Dr. Blake blandly and Janet cast a baleful glance on Phyllis who winked at her.

Another silence followed and Alice was just coughing nervously when Phyllis came to the rescue.

"The cause of our suddenly bursting in upon you like this, Doctor, is that we have some news which just won't keep a minute longer. Do tell them, Lorry," she begged.

Lorry shook her head; she couldn't tell before Dr. Blake. She would cry or do something foolish if she tried. She wished they would all go home and leave her alone with Alice.

"You tell," she said to Phyllis.

Phyllis took the center of the stage and announced grandly, "Jimmy is coming home."

"What for?" cried Alice in alarm.

"To paint the capitol building at Greentown," Phyllis explained.

"On the outside?" teased Debby.

"Of course not," Lorry flared up, "his sketches won the prize."

"Oh, my darling, how simply wonderful!" said Alice, who could always be relied upon to say the right thing. "Does that mean a wedding in the summer?" she went on.

"Jimmy seems to think it means one right away," replied Lorry, who was blushing becomingly.

"The wretch," laughed Alice. "We'll have to begin making plans right away then, won't we," and her eyes sparkled.

"In that case I had better be going," said Dr. Blake hurriedly, "May I offer you my congratulations and implore you to do nothing rashly. Mrs. Westlake," he continued, turning to Alice, "I beg of you to reconsider your decision and to tell me the name of the culprit."

"That, Doctor, is something I shall never do," said Alice solemnly.

She led him politely to the front door, ushered him out and did not forget to ask him to call again. Then she closed the door, turned on her heel and flew back to the living room, caught Lorry in her arms and waltzed her around.

"Angel child, I am bursting with excitement. Do show some signs of emotion!" she exclaimed and held Lorry off at arm's length to look at her.

Lorry's eyes were bright with tears and her stepmother pulled her to her and gave her a big hug.

"Did you go for the mail, by any chance?" asked Debby, who was expecting a letter from Archie Lang, one of the boys they had met the summer before, and of whom she was very fond. Even the arrival of Jimmy had to take second place.

"Oh, Deb," said Lorry guiltily, "I clean forgot the mail, I was so excited."

Phyllis jumped up.

"Come along, Deb," she said smilingly, "we'll go in the car and get the mail, but we'll leave Janet here."

"Oh, Phyl, you're a darling," sighed Debby; "come on, let's go."

Phyllis borrowed a sweater from Lorry, for the day was chilly, and she and Janet had come without their coats.

The rest watched them from the doorway and then hurried back into the house to talk over plans.

"What kind of a wedding do you want, dear child?" questioned Alice.

Lorry looked at her blankly.

"I don't know," she said, "sometimes I think I want the biggest one in creation and sometimes I think I just want to go to a Justice of the Peace and have it all over with in a minute. You tell me what I want, Mother, dearest."

To be called dearest by Lorry was something to be remembered and Alice's eyes took on a tender look as she replied:

"Let's stick to the big wedding, darling, then all our friends can have a good time, too. And, anyway," she added, "it would be a sin and a shame not to dress you in satin and lace."

"Oh, Mother, I'd be fussed to death; let's have it very simple," pleaded Lorry.

"Simple, but exquisite," Alice was dreaming as she spoke, "I wonder if Drake the florist can get any orange blossoms."

"Oh, dear," sighed Lorry, and she turned to Janet, "Jan, do take that thing off your head."

"Oh, I'd forgotten all about it," said Janet, and she took off the offending towel and threw it into a corner of the sofa. Then she shook out her short, wavy hair and gave a glance at her reflection in the mirror. Merry brown eyes with flecks of gold looked back at her, and the smudge of dirt only enhanced her beauty, for it added to the roguishness of her expression.

To see a reflection of Janet was to see one of Phyllis, except that Janet was a little more exaggerated, a little more roguish, a little more colored as to cheeks and eyebrows but enough alike to confuse even the best of their friends.

Janet turned from the mirror.

"You'll look glorious in a veil, Lorry," she said.

"Oh, must I?" replied Lorry, looking scared.

And just then they heard Phyllis honking her horn at a terrible rate in the front yard and they knew that she was the bearer of news.

They all rushed out to meet her.

"An invitation from Kit St. John to visit her in Buffalo, and here's a telegram for you, Alice," Phyllis greeted them.

Alice took the envelope and tore it open, read it, looked on the other side and read it again.

"It's an invitation for us all from Judy to spend the summer with her and, oh, girls, think of a wedding at Happy-Go-Lucky Lodge."

The girls thought and were silent at the very idea.

CHAPTER III

ON THE ROAD

AND so they'll be married in the Adirondacks and we hope they'll be happy ever after," Janet was explaining to her aunt and Nan as they sat before the fire in the little house where Janet had spent her childhood.

The mahogany, polished to a rich brown, glowed in the firelight and the blaze was reflected on the faces of the four people who sat by the hearth.

Auntie Mogs was a little older and a little more like a Dresden shepherdess than ever, but she wore the same contented smile on her lips as though she found the world a very good place to live in.

Nan was stouter, and although she smiled, her brows came together in a little frown as though she found much to do in a busy world.

The twins sat at their feet, Janet by Nan and

Phyllis by Auntie Mogs, and they were telling them all about Lorry's news.

"Goodness me," exclaimed Auntie Mogs, "it seems like yesterday that you brought Lorry and Debby up to the house that cold night when you found them alone at the farm. What a lot has happened since then."

"How we are to accept all our invitations this summer I don't know," complained Janet. "Next week we leave for Kit St. John's, and then the week after we go up to Happy-Go-Lucky and visit Judy; and then there's Sally's and Daphne's weddings the first of September, and dear knows what we shall have to crowd in between."

"Are Alice and Lorry going to meet Jimmy in the car?" asked Nan.

"No, Alice says she simply hasn't time, and that one of us will have to go. Lorry hasn't decided which of us she wants so far," Phyllis replied.

"Why don't you both go and order Sally and Daphne's wedding presents on the way?" asked Auntie Mogs.

"We would if we knew what to give them,"

said Janet, "but we simply can't make up our minds."

"Give them each a ring, there's something so personal about a ring."

"Oh, Nan, that's a wonderful idea, but I've got a better one," laughed Janet, "a bracelet that spells friendship, the letters in gold, white gold—platinum is too expensive—each letter cut out and joined to the other by a little link, and then have them joined together by a clasp with Janet and Phyllis engraved on it."

"That's a wonderful idea and I know the very jeweler who will make it," exclaimed Nan. "Used to be a friend of mine and has a shop just off the avenue. I'll dig out his address for you right away."

"Splendid!" exclaimed Phyllis. "What could be more appropriate?"

"You ought to buy Ivan and Helen something, too, while you're down in town," reminded Auntie Mogs.

"Bless the dears, if we could only think what to give them. They don't want china and they've got all the silver they want. I know, let's give them books. Ivan likes to read as much as Helen

and what could be a nicer present?" demanded Phyllis.

"Kipling for Helen and Stevenson for Ivan, and we'll have them specially bound," Janet put in.

"And why not get Jimmy to draw a bookplate for them," suggested Auntie Mogs, "that would make it ever so much more personal."

"The very thing," exclaimed Phyllis, "only let's get David Malone to draw the bookplate, he adores Helen so and he's too poor to give her a proper wedding present."

"You forget the really lovely canvas he sent her. It is a picture of her apple orchard in full bloom and Helen's crazy about it."

"Yes, but he told me the last time he was here that he was just sick because he couldn't send her something of more value."

"Then he'll love doing the bookplate."

It was the twins who were talking, and the two older women sat back in approving silence. At last Janet jumped to her feet.

"Time we were going home, Phyl, or we'll be too late to change for dinner. Let's go," Janet added slangily.

"Righto," said Phyllis, and she stooped to kiss Auntie Mogs on the top of her head, then she kissed Nan and Janet followed suit. They were soon in the car and tearing for home.

The next morning Lorry and Debby were at the house early, and Lorry was delighted at the idea of both the twins going to New York with her to meet Jimmy.

"And, Phyl, you'll drive," she said, as they pulled their chairs out to the terrace and sat down.

"Turn and turn about," said Phyllis, "if you're going to live in Greentown you'll have to learn to drive better than you do, because you'll want to be coming over here all the time to visit the family."

"Oh, no, she won't," laughed Debby. "She's going to devote all of her time to her Jimmy," she teased.

"I wouldn't talk if I were you," retorted Lorry. "Anyway, I don't sleep with Jimmy's letters under my pillow."

"Well, I'm not a Spartan," replied Debby seriously, "and I sleep with Archie's letters next to my heart—when I remember to," she added,

and then wondered why everybody laughed.

"Oh, let's talk about the wedding," suggested Phyllis, "you've definitely decided it is going to be at camp, haven't you?"

The morning sped by on wings as they talked of preparations, and Alice was sent for and came up for luncheon.

Weddings were in the air and plans filled the days that followed until the momentous morning when they were to start to meet Jimmy.

Phyllis at the wheel, with Janet and Lorry squeezed in beside her, started off over the mucky road on a beautiful spring morning. They expected to make New York that night and put up at the Ladds' to be in time to meet Jimmy the next day. But alas! for man-laid plans.

About eleven o'clock in the morning they had a puncture.

"Cheer up," said Janet, "somebody's sure to be around to help fix it sooner or later."

So they waited, but not a soul passed them except a huge car from the city, and none of them had the nerve to stop it.

"I'll fix it myself, by heck!" decided Phyllis,

and she got out to find that they had sunk several inches, and that there was nothing to rest the jack on but squashy mud.

By this time Lorry was wringing her hands and Phyllis felt that something had to be done.

"There's a house over there and I'm going to walk over to it. You two stay here and take care of the car," she said.

"Not much you are," replied Janet, "Lorry can watch the car but I'm going with you; there may be a cross dog or something."

Phyllis nodded and together they struck off across the fields. Now fields in early spring are apt to be muddy and this was no exception, but on they plowed, sometimes ankle deep in mire. They came to the second field and Phyllis stopped.

"Why, I thought this farmhouse was only a field away and look at it, it seems farther than ever," she said.

"Can't be helped; it's the only house in sight and we have to get to it," Janet replied, starting to trudge on.

In the middle of the next field when they were both tired and very muddy Phyllis had a terrible

thought: Suppose the farm was deserted! There was no smoke coming from the chimneys and she could see no signs of habitation.

The same thought struck Janet almost at the same time and they turned to look at each other dismally; there was no need for words, there never was between them.

"Well," said Janet after a pause, "we might as well go on and see."

"Oh, Jan, I shall sit right down and weep if there's nobody around."

Phyllis looked near to tears now, and once she floundered in the mud and went down on one knee, which added to her bedraggled condition.

"We'll go back by the road anyway," said Janet.

They approached the house in fear and trembling and the first sight that met their eyes was a broken window. The whole place had a strangely deserted look, and to add to the utter desolation the door sagged on its hinges and was gaping wide open.

"What miserable luck," exclaimed Phyllis, "I could say things, I'm so mad."

Janet patted her on the back and demanded:
"Are we downhearted?"

Phyllis' "no" was very faint.

They walked back by the road which was not much better than the fields and finally, turning a bend, they came in sight of the car and at the same time they heard the horn honking violently.

"There must be something wrong with Lorry," said Janet speeding up her walk to a run.

"Maybe some one's held her up," suggested Phyllis, "and Jan, we left both our pocketbooks in the car."

"My Aunt Jane's poll parrot," exclaimed Janet, "if there's been a holdup and we've missed it."

"That's so like you, Jan," replied Phyllis sourly, "you never think of a practical end at all."

They reached the car breathless. Lorry saw them coming and still kept the horn tooting.

"What's the trouble?" shouted Janet.

"The car's all fixed, the tire is on and everything," announced Lorry gayly. "The nicest man came along just after you'd left. I honked

for you but you had gone so far you couldn't hear me, I expect."

"Lorry," said Phyllis looking at her strangely, "I think I could cheerfully wring your neck, you about scared us to death."

"I wanted you to hurry," said Lorry un-squelched and gay as ever. "Who did you find at the farm?"

"Oh, we found a giant asleep under the tree and we didn't wake him," returned Janet, "we were afraid he might not be a friendly giant, and the house has had a spell cast over it, and I'm talking nonsense and I know it but I can't stop."

"Well, let's go," said Lorry, looking at Janet as if she thought she had gone crazy. "Isn't there a short cut to the main road from here?" she asked, getting out the map and scanning it thoughtfully. "Yes, here it is, we keep on this road and strike the main turnpike about three miles on."

Phyllis started the car without a word and off they went down the road. It looked like smooth sailing ahead until they came to a hill. It was an innocent enough looking hill, but at the bottom of it ran a brook, level with the road, and

the brook had overflowed its banks and covered the road with a rich brown mud.

Into it they went and the car sank lower and lower until the mud was up to the hubs, and there they stuck, without a house in sight and with no sign of a human being anywhere around.

The girls sat and looked at each other and then Janet began to laugh.

CHAPTER IV

TROOPER O'HARA

THREE hours later they all sat in their places and looked at one another grimly. They had walked miles in both directions without finding a soul and they were muddy and crestfallen.

"Are we downhearted?" asked Janet weakly.

"Jan, if you say that again I'll murder you," replied Phyllis tearfully, "I am downhearted and I don't care who knows it."

"Where's your sense of humor?" Janet rallied her, "this is really a very amusing situation, my friends, she added.

"I lost my sense of humor in the last mudhole I fell into," bewailed Lorry, "and what you can see funny in staying here all night and missing Jimmy to-morrow morning, I can't see."

Janet looked at her friend and realized she was showing great fortitude. She knew if she

were in her place that she would be raving by this time, and she admired Lorry's Spartan courage.

"No, I don't think that is going to be so interesting, either," complained Phyllis, "what will Jimmy say?"

"Oh, don't," pleaded Lorry.

"We won't stay here all night," said Janet, "somebody is sure to come along."

"Jan, *will* you stop being so cheerful?" demanded Phyllis, "I know we are going to stay here all night, and they'll probably find our frozen corpses in the morning."

"Well, let's get comfortable," suggested Janet. "If we close up all the windows and roll up in steamer rugs we can at least keep ourselves warm."

"And die of gas fumes," grumbled Lorry, tucking the rug around her and settling down for the night.

Phyllis and Janet followed suit and the three heads were laid side by side on the uncomfortable back seat, three pairs of muddy boots stretched out across the floor of the car and when Lorry moved uncomfortably the covers came off of

Phyllis, who was sitting in the middle and she in turn yanked them off of Janet.

They had just fallen asleep when the clop clop of a horse's hoofs stole gently into their dreams. A minute later they were rudely awakened by a gruff voice saying:

"Come out of that now, I have you covered."

"Don't move, Jan," whispered Phyllis, and Lorry with a little sigh said, "This is the end."

"Nonsense," exclaimed Janet, "here, at last, is help," and she lowered the window down on her side of the car.

She looked out into the black night that was faintly illumined by the light from the lamps. She saw a figure on horseback and she got the silhouette of a broadbrimmed hat.

"Are you," she cried, and her voice sounded very loud in her ears "are you the state police?"

"I am, and what in blazes are you doing here?" he turned his flashlight in at the window and fairly gasped as he saw Phyllis and Lorry and their frightened faces.

Another human soul in this wilderness was all that Phyllis needed to make her fearless again, though a minute before she had thought

of highway robbers and even that thought had been a comfort.

"We're stuck in the mud and we've been here simply ages," she told the astonished rider.

"Stuck you are, I can see that," he replied with just the faintest indication of an Irish brogue.

"We've walked for miles each way and we couldn't find a house," Janet went on.

"Oh, yes, we found one deserted one, but that seems years ago," laughed Phyllis.

"Are we on another continent by any chance, or has all the world died except you?" demanded Lorry.

"Well, it's good spirits you have for all your troubles," laughed the trooper, "and now what's best to be done?" he inquired kindly.

"Anything so long as we make the Hoboken dock by eight o'clock to-morrow morning," exclaimed Lorry, "that's absolutely essential."

"Sure that's a seventy-five cent word you're using," laughed the man, "let me think now."

They were all silent for a moment, and Janet was having a fight with herself not to say, "I told you so," to Lorry and Phyllis, but she rea-

soned that would be the last straw and would probably reduce Phyllis to hysterics. No, she would keep still and save it for another time.

"I can't be in two places at once," the trooper decided, "and I will just have to leave you, but there's a highwayman out in these woods, that's who I was looking for when I found you, but I'll trust to luck's he's off in the other direction and I'll gallop for the life of me and find a team of horses to pull you out."

"You might leave us your gun," suggested Janet coolly, "then if he bothers us I could pop him in the shoulder perhaps."

"You could not, my guns go with me. I don't believe in women using lethal weapons," the trooper grinned as he said this and wheeled his horse so that it headed north.

"I'm off now," he sang out and they watched him as he splashed down the road.

The hour they had to wait was the longest in their lives, every sound was the highwayman and every shadow a host of evil. Janet tried to keep up the spirits of the other two by reciting tales of adventure, but as each one was more hair raising than the other, she managed to terrify

her hearers to the speechless state before the welcome sound of a horse's hoofs splashing through the mud again set their minds at rest.

Of course Lorry pretended all the way through that she was not a bit scared, but anyone with half an eye could have seen that she was trembling.

The trooper brought back good news. Even at that time of night he had been able to persuade a farmer to come and haul them out for twenty dollars.

"He wanted fifty but I made him come down to twenty," the trooper laughed.

"Twenty he shall have," replied Phyllis. "I've been thinking in hundreds of dollars for the last hour. I know I wouldn't get anyone out of this mudhole for less than that."

"Don't let the farmer I hauled out of bed hear you talk like that or he'll boost his price," laughed the trooper. "Have you been riding around the country with a hundred dollars loose in your jeans?"

"Oh, I think we could scrape up a hundred dollars between us," replied Phyllis indifferently.

"Well, all I can say is those who let you out ought to be ashamed of themselves."

"They gave us too much credit for not taking short cuts. If we'd stuck to the main road, we'd been in New York by now," Phyllis explained. "It was our fault, but how should we know that that brook would overflow its banks?"

The trooper shook his head and then listened intently.

"Here they come now," he said as the rumble of wheels came to them.

"Wha' be you?" came a voice through the gloom.

The practiced way the farmer pulled them out of their mudhole showed that he was used to that service. He received his money a little grumblingly and set off for home. There was nothing left to do but say good-bye to the trooper.

"I don't know how we can thank you for rescuing us," Janet began. "Won't you give us your name please, and tell us whether you are married?"

"My name's Timothy O'Hara," and he gave the number and letter of his troop. "I'm a

widower," he went on, "got a baby boy seven years old." Then he added in a softer voice, "He's been a cripple ever since he was three, but he's a handsome little duffer and as bright as a whip."

"Oh, give us his address and we'll go to see him sometime," promised Phyllis, "and if you ever get over as far as Old Chester, be sure to drop in and see us. Our husbands would so like to thank you for all that you have done for us to-night."

"Married are you, and I thought you was a parcel of children," and the face of Timothy O'Hara showed his acute embarrassment.

He rode beside them until they came to the state road and he watched them out of sight with a pleased grin on his homely face.

"What time is it?" demanded Lorry, who had been almost silent through the good-byes. She was thinking of Jimmy slowly coming up the bay and no one on the dock to meet him. But she reckoned without Phyllis, who was determined to get there on time. She ran the car as fast as she dared through New Haven and on down towards New York, following right behind a big

motor coach that had come through from Boston and was bent on making a speed record all its own.

The sun rose gold and pink in the east and the girls marveled at its beauty, and wondered, as people always do, why they didn't get up oftener to see it rise.

By six o'clock they were in the outskirts of New York City, and they threaded their way downtown with the early morning traffic to the accompaniment of jangling milk cans.

When they arrived at the dock in Hoboken, the boat was already in and they left the car hurriedly, presented their passes and raced for the dock. They found a harassed Jimmy in Section C.

In spite of the many onlookers, he put his arms around Lorry and hugged her tight.

"Angel of my heart, I thought you had changed your mind, I thought you were dead, I saw you run over a million times. What under the sun kept you from being here when the boat docked?"

"Don't be ridiculous," said Lorry gently, "we almost didn't get here at all." And she told the

story of the night in cut and dried words.

Jimmy looked at the twins and whistled, "Wait till old Peter and English find this out," he said. "They'll never let you out of their sights again."

"Oh, but they won't find it out," laughed Janet, "we simply won't tell. What's the use of getting them all excited when we are all right. I'll explain to the Hillises and the Ladds that we were unavoidably detained. Phyl, call them up now."

Phyllis went towards the phone on the dock and on the way there she met Daphne and Chuck coming towards her. The relief in Daphne's face at sight of her was almost comical.

"Where have you been?" she demanded. "We sat up all night waiting for you, and we called up the house and Peter and English are tearing their hair and the whole world is upset. The troopers are out combing the hills for you, too."

"Then the fat's in the fire," said Phyllis, "and I suppose we shall have to tell all about it."

"Call up Old Chester, before you do anything else," counseled Chuck, and Phyllis put the call in, then they went back to the rest.

Everybody talked at once and, when the phone rang, Phyllis rushed to answer it, with Janet at her heels.

They learned from a terrified Nan that the boys were out hunting for them but that they kept in touch with the house. The last time they had called up they had said that they had met Trooper O'Hara and he had told them of the night's adventure.

Nan promised to tell them when next they rang up, and she finished with:

"It was a wild idea anyway, I was always against it. I'll never let you out of my sight again. Mogs is prostrated."

"We seem to have gotten in wrong any way you look at it," Phyllis remarked as she turned from the phone.

But the adventures of the day were not over. They walked leisurely from the dock to the waiting car and there pinned to the windshield was a ticket for parking before a hydrant.

CHAPTER V

SHOPPING

BREAKFAST was being served at the Ladds' in true English fashion—all the food was on the sideboard and the guests helped themselves. Sally had brought the idea over with her from England, and insisted upon it so that Quentin might feel at home. He looked very much at home this morning, as he sat beside Sally on one side of the table, while Janet and Lorry and Jimmy and Phyllis sat opposite them. Jimmy was trying to hold Lorry's hand and Lorry was trying to make him behave, which was always difficult, for Jimmy was irresistible.

The conversation turned to Phyllis' summons and Mr. Ladd, from the head of the table said laughingly:

"You'd better pay it, my dear, and say nothing."

"But I want to explain to the judge just why I did such a silly thing," insisted Phyllis.

"Much better not, my dear," replied Mr. Ladd, "just 'guilty, your honor' and pay the five dollars he asks for."

"Well, perhaps," said Phyllis still unconvinced. "You'll go with me, Jan, won't you?" she asked, looking across the table at Janet, who nodded vigorously, her mouth full of porridge.

"I'll lay you a wager, sir, that the judge doesn't fine Phyl a cent," remarked Quentin.

"Oh, but he will," laughed Mr. Ladd, "but I'll take your wager. What shall it be?"

"Theatre tickets for the whole crowd for to-night for Cici. If Phyl gets fined I'll pay for them, and if she doesn't it's up to you, sir."

"All right, my boy, we shall see. But you don't know the judges in this country; they are what the younger generation call hard-boiled." Mr. Ladd folded up his paper and prepared to leave the table.

Phyllis jumped up, too.

"Oh, is it time to start?" she asked a trifle nervously. She was dreading the ordeal of appearing in court. "I wish it was a little later in the

day. I hate going places early in the morning," she said and the rest laughed.

"Cheer up, Phyl, when the judge sees you and Jan it will be the old story. I agree with Quentin. You'll be let off with a warning," said Jimmy.

"Good luck," sang out Sally, as the twins went to put on their hats and coats.

The court room was crowded when they entered it a few minutes later, but they did not have to wait long before their case was tried. The judge growled something at Phyllis as she stood up before him and then he looked down at her over the top of his glasses. He saw her and then he saw Janet.

"God bless my soul, you're twins, aren't you?" he announced rather than asked. "Now which one of you parked before the hydrant?"

"We both did," Janet laughed back at him.

"Well, well, well," he rumbled. He was beginning to enjoy himself.

"Oh, Judge," said Phyllis in her most pleading voice, "if you had any idea what we'd been through, you wouldn't blame us for parking before a fire house, much less a hydrant."

Janet had risen now and was standing beside her twin. The judge looked at them. They looked so ridiculously alike that he burst out into a loud guffaw.

"Tell me your story," he said presently.

Phyllis began and every now and then Janet added a word. They painted the night of their adventure in its most humorous phase, and by the time they had reached the arrival of the state trooper and Janet was imitating his brogue, the judge was in convulsions of laughter.

Mr. Ladd owned later that he knew he was beaten as soon as Phyllis began her story, and he was. The judge, a broad grin from ear to ear, said he would like to listen to some more of their adventures but he hadn't the time. He warned them not to park before a water hydrant again unless they had been out the night before taking a mud bath. In that case, he said he would pardon them again and again as long as they told him all about it.

"Oh, thank you ever so much, Judge," sighed Phyllis and Janet echoed her, and they left the court room as the judge said in a very cross and peremptory voice:

"Next case."

"Wasn't he a lamb?" demanded Janet of Mr. Ladd, as they went down the courthouse steps together.

"I don't know about that," replied Mr. Ladd. "He's supposed to be one of the terrors of the bench. When I saw him I said to myself, 'Phyllis is lucky if she gets off with a ten-dollar fine,' but you and Janet seemed to tickle him to death by just being twins. Unfair, I call it, and now that future son-in-law of mine will crow over me and, more than that, I shall have to buy theatre tickets for us all tonight."

"Poor Mr. Ladd," teased Janet.

"Now what are you going to do the rest of the day?" Mr. Ladd inquired. "The car is at your disposal."

"Oh, no, we couldn't possibly think of using the car, Sally or Mrs. Ladd might want to use it. We'll jump on the elevated and ride uptown. We have something very particular to do this morning and we don't want Sally or Taffy with us."

"Now, don't you children go and spend a lot of money on those two girls. They'll get more

wedding presents than is good for them anyway," Mr. Ladd said sternly.

"Oh, we won't," promised the twins, and they parted on the corner.

"A toy store first," said Janet, "and then the jeweler's, and after that home; and, Jan, I admit it but I'm dead for sleep and I'm going to take a nap before the theatre tonight."

"Why, you slept all day yesterday, lazybones," teased Phyllis. "Lorry is the one who ought to be sleepy. Imagine spending the day at an art gallery after such a night as we experienced."

"Ah, but she has Jimmy and we'd have done it with English or Peter when we were engaged," Janet reminded her.

"Imagine English and Peter in an art gallery anyway," laughed Phyllis. "No, I see myself hunting a secluded nook in the park and putting my head down on English's shoulder and having a nice, comfortable sleep."

"Lorry seems to like art galleries," said Janet, "it's a lucky thing she does."

They climbed the "L" steps and rode uptown and got out at Thirty-fourth Street. They went

into a toy department of one of the big stores and the first thing that caught their eye was a train of cars that ran by electricity. It went around curves and through tunnels and had switches and signals and a station.

"He'll love that," said Phyllis.

"Of course he will," Janet agreed.

They were a little staggered at the price but it was worth it, considering the service that Timothy O'Hara had rendered them.

"I saw it first, so I'll pay for it," said Phyllis. "Now you look around and get something."

"Books, of course," exclaimed Janet, and they went down to the book department and reveled in boys' stories for a half an hour. At the end of that time they had made one salesgirl very happy by the size of their order.

"Poor little chap," sighed Phyllis, "I wish we could send him baseball bats and tennis rackets."

"So do I. Suppose our Tommy was lame; think how awful it would be," replied Janet, and she added suddenly, "Phyl, let's get Tommy Junior a train like that. Think what fun the boys would have playing with it."

No sooner thought of than done, and this time Janet wrote out the check.

"Now let's get out of here before we spend any more money," exclaimed Phyllis.

They walked over to Fifth Avenue and uptown until they came to the jeweler's whom Nan had recommended. Her name as usual made everybody stand at attention, and they were soon closeted with the head of the firm in his private room and he was drawing designs for them for their friendship bracelets. They chose the design they wanted and came back to Fifth Avenue and caught a bus for home.

True to her threat, Janet slept all the afternoon and was the only one of the party who was not yawning when dinner time came.

The theatre party was a large one, as it included Mr. and Mrs. Hillis, and Daphne and Chuck, as well as the twins, Lorry and Jimmy, Sally and Quentin, and Mr. and Mrs. Ladd.

The musical comedy was Cici and it was very bright and colorful. They all clapped heartily when the curtain went down on the first act and Daphne looked at Chuck with a puzzled frown.

"Maybe," she said seriously, "I am making a

mistake to marry you after all, Chuck. I think my heart's really on the stage."

"Come out and get some fresh air," suggested Chuck, but for all his casualness he looked worried. Was Daphne going to break her engagement with him again, he wondered.

Mr. Ladd and Mr. Hillis deserted their wives to take Janet and Phyllis out to walk up and down before the theatre in the warm spring air. Lorry and Jimmy and Sally and Quentin followed them.

Standing right in their way in the doorway lighting a cigarette was Eustace Blake. Sally saw him and wanted to run away, but he turned and came towards her with his hand held out.

"Well, Sally, congratulations," he said grimly, "I haven't offered them before because I simply couldn't, but I do wish you happiness," and with that he turned on his heel and went off in the opposite direction.

"My Aunt Jane's poll parrot," was all Sally could find to say.

CHAPTER VI

THE MEETING

THE week that followed Jimmy's arrival was one of hectic preparation for camp. The Westlake family was going up first and the twins were to follow after their Buffalo visit to Kit St. John. There had been talk of going by motor but, after their adventure in the mud, the boys had vetoed the idea, and it was decided that they go by train from Boston and change at Albany.

"And don't take any short cuts," admonished Peter, as they stood on the platform seeing them off one Friday morning.

"Shall we never hear the end of that?" demanded Phyllis ruefully.

"Never as long as I live," retorted Peter. "How about you, English?"

"Oh, I've already sworn to keep silence," English returned laughing.

"What a henpecked man you are," teased Janet. "Now I shouldn't think of asking Peter to let up on it; he gets so much fun out of it, and it doesn't bother me at all."

That was the difference between the twins. It really hurt Phyllis to be teased about their mistake in taking the short cut, but Janet rather enjoyed it. In some ways she had a keener sense of humor than her twin.

"Well, here's the train, and as usual I hate saying good-bye," said Janet as Peter kissed her.

"You humbug you," he teased, "you're just dying to go and you know it."

At this point Helen and Ivan hurried up with the two children, Sonya and Hester. Measles had broken out at Hilltop, and that was the reason school had closed early, and they were all home the latter part of May instead of June when school generally closed.

"Darlings, here's some anem—amen—oh, you know what I mean," gasped Sonya holding out a bunch of white anemones in her moist little hand.

Hester proffered a small bunch of arbutus in

silence and the girls kissed them hurriedly, for the train was just steaming into the station.

Over the hill came the Westlakes in their Ford, Jimmy riding on the running board, Lorry and Debby in the back seat with Little Thing and Deedee and Alice and Dodo and Di squeezed into the front seat.

"Say good-bye to them for us," called Phyllis as she caught sight of them. They were all waving as though they expected the train to wait until they reached the platform.

"All aboard," called the guard and hurried them into the car.

Lorry had been invited to Kit's with the twins, but she had refused the invitation on account of Jimmy. Now as she watched the train pull slowly out of sight, leaving a golden haze of dust in its wake, she almost regretted it.

"They'll have such a good time," she said to herself.

In the car the twins were craning their necks to catch a last look at those left on the platform, and they waved their hands long after there was any chance of being seen.

"I know we've left home countless times, but

don't you still get a funny little sick feeling when you see the boys disappear?" asked Janet as they settled themselves in their seats.

"Yes, it's a kind of a gone feeling," agreed Phyllis.

They sat in silence for a few minutes, each busy with her thoughts. Janet broke it by asking:

"What are we going to take Kit and the girls?"

"A whopping big box of candy. We can get it at Paige and Shaw's in Boston," Phyllis answered. "You remember what a little glutton Kit was in Florence over those big squashy chocolates we got on that little side street. Remember?"

"Of course I remember. I wish we could get some of those for her now," said Janet.

"Maybe we can," replied Phyllis, "we've an hour and a half to spare. Maybe we can hunt up an Italian candy store."

"Well, don't let's lose our train," laughed Janet.

They pulled into Boston later in the day and were just leaving the station to hunt a candy

store, when Phyllis spied a familiar figure walking or rather striding rapidly along ahead of them.

"Jan," she cried, "who is that?"

"Blest if I know. He looks familiar, doesn't he?" replied Janet.

"Hurry up and pass him; then we can tell who it is," Phyllis suggested, and they walked faster, came abreast of the striding figure and then passed him. They turned around and looked but, although his face was ever so familiar, they could not place him.

"Who under the sun?" began Janet just as the man looked up.

"Hello, hello, hello," boomed a hearty voice and suddenly they recollected.

"Why, it's our state trooper. How do you do, Mr. O'Hara," and Phyllis held out her hand.

"Well, this is what I call luck," exclaimed Timothy O'Hara. "Now I can thank you in person for those grand toys you sent the little one, and if you'll step this way I'll show you the youngster himself. He'll be that thrilled to meet you."

"Oh, how nice," cried Janet, "but what are you doing in Boston?"

"We're here to see the doctor. He's a new man and he may be able to do something for the boy; anyways I'm always hoping." Timothy O'Hara's face broke into a broad grin.

They followed him back to the station waiting room and there in a corner by himself sat Timothy Junior, his poor little leg in a big iron brace but his eyes defying it in their merry twinkle. He was a handsome little lad, and he looked well cared for and happy.

"Sure, Tim, get ready with your best thank-you speech, for these are the two ladies that sent you that grand train and all those books," O'Hara said by way of introduction.

"Oh," said Tim and his eyes opened wide and glowed like coals of fire.

"Well, say something, my man," protested his father.

"I can't, Father," said Tim with just the faintest touch of a brogue, "I'm too full right here," and he touched his heart.

"That's thanks enough," laughed Phyllis, shaking the hand which he held out.

"No, it's not enough," said the small boy shyly, "but the toys was so grand I can't find the right words."

"Don't try," laughed Janet, "and now suppose we sit with you until your father comes back," she suggested.

"That'll be grand," said Tim.

"Perhaps Mr. O'Hara will get our candy for us," added Phyllis, opening her pocketbook.

"No," said Janet, "I have a better idea. I'll go get the candy and you stay here and amuse Tim. I'll be back in a jiffy."

"All right," agreed Phyllis, "I'll love amusing Tim, and you might bring us some candy while you're about it," she added.

"That's why I'm going," Janet laughed and, with Mr. O'Hara, went off in the direction of the entrance.

"Now we can have a nice talk," said Phyllis. "Tell me what sort of game you like to play the best."

"My train," replied Tim. "Gee! you ought to see it go 'round the corners and through the tunnels and pull up just like a big one at the station, and then the signal lights go on, and

once I had a wreck but of course there were no lives lost. The engineer jumped."

"That was lucky," said Phyllis entering into the spirit of the thing. "What caused the wreck?"

"Well, you see," began Tim, "we was going through a part of the Rockies, and one of the rocks got loose and rolled down on the track, and o' course the train hit it and rolled off on the side and do you know what?" he added excitedly.

"No, tell me," replied Phyllis eagerly.

"Well, once the train was held up by bandits in a lonely place, and if it hadn't been for Father, who was on duty in that country, everybody on that train would have been robbed. But Father held up the bandits single handed and kept them at bay until the rest of the troop came up and so of course everything was all right."

"What happened to the bandits?" demanded Phyllis.

"Well, the leader got away," replied Tim. "It wasn't Father's fault, of course, but there was one trooper who ought not to have been in the service and he let him go. You see," he

added, "I had to have the bandit escape because he was so awfully brave I got kinda sorry for him."

"Of course," agreed Phyllis. "And how did you like your books?"

"Oh, they are swell," exclaimed Tim. "There's one about this here Robin Hood and his friend Little John that Father reads me, and then there's King Arthur; he was some guy, he was, though I think Galahad was a little bit of a sissy. Have you got any little brothers?" he asked abruptly.

"No, but I have a big brother," Phyllis explained, "and he has a little boy about your age. Next time he comes north I'll bring him to see you."

"Can he walk straight?" demanded Tim.

"Yes," said Phyllis gently.

"Then he won't want to play with me," said Tim cheerfully. "None of the boys around home do."

"Oh, but he would," insisted Phyllis. "Why, you'd have the time of your life playing with that train."

"Maybe," said Tim shortly and just then

Janet came back with her arms full of bundles.

"I couldn't get the Italian candy but I got some almost like it," she exclaimed, "and here's a book of pictures for Tim and a box of candy and a singing top." She handed him the packages.

"Gee, but you're nice," said Tim earnestly. "I guess no other boy has such swell friends."

"We've got to catch our train now. Will you be all right here?" Janet went on. "Hurry Phyl, we have very little time."

Phyllis bent down and kissed the curly head intent on opening the packages, and two arms encircled her and gave her a big hug.

"We'll come and see you soon," promised Phyllis.

Janet shook hands with him and then abruptly leaned over and kissed him.

They were just in time for their train and, as they sat down in their compartment, Phyllis said without rhyme or reason:

"I want to put my head down and cry my eyes out."

"I know exactly how you feel," agreed Janet and just then the train started.

CHAPTER VII

LOST IN BUFFALO

I DON'T see Kit anywhere," said Phyllis, as she jumped off the train early the next morning and looked around the bleak station.

"She's probably in the waiting room," suggested Janet, and together they made their way to the big waiting room, where they walked up and down but could see no sign of Kit.

"Phyl, are you sure we came on the right day?" demanded Janet. "What'll we do if she doesn't come?"

"Call her up on the telephone, of course, foolish one. I know today is the right day for our arrival. There's just been some slip up."

"It isn't like Kit to forget us. I don't understand it."

"Well, cheer up; maybe she's had a blow-out," Phyllis insisted upon being cheerful.

"There's nothing to do but sit down and wait,"

sighed Janet, picking out a corner and settling herself in it.

Meanwhile, at another station quite across town, Kit was rushing around trying to find the twins. She asked conductors and brakemen, who had come in on the train from New York, if they had seen two girls who were exactly alike, but none of them could help her.

"Well, I guess they just didn't come," said Kit finally to a friendly porter who was helping her hunt.

"Missy, is you sure you got the right station?" he asked, scratching his head.

"But this is the train I always come on," protested Kit, "and I'm sure they were coming from New York."

"Better telephone home and see if they all sent you any message," suggested the porter.

"Yes, I'll do that," said Kit rummaging in her bag for a nickel.

Now to return to the other station where Phyllis and Janet sat impatiently waiting.

"Telephone the house, Phyl," Janet said at last and Phyllis nodded.

She looked up the number in the book and called up the town address to have central report that no one answered.

"Of course they are not in town. Kit wrote that they were at the lake. I wonder if there's another station in this town. If there is, we'll go to it and chance finding her there," Phyllis decided.

Janet jumped up, anything for action, and they went out to find a taxi-cab.

Just then, at her station, Kit made up her mind to try the other one, so she jumped into her brand new red roadster and buzzed away in that direction.

She passed the twins about halfway there, but at the moment of passing there was a trolley car between them.

The twins searched the new station in vain and Kit searched the old. At last all of them gave up.

The twins drove to the Statler, and Kit telephoned once more, this time to her old friend, Todd Briggs.

"And I know they are in town and we're probably chasing each other all over the place,"

she finished. "Todd, come and help me find them."

"Right you are," agreed Todd with alacrity; "stay put and I'll tell the boss I have a news story to follow up." Todd was a newspaper reporter and he managed to spend most of his time out of the office.

Kit waited for him and in a few minutes he appeared. He was red-headed, freckled and very homely, but it would have been hard to find anyone who had more friends or who was in greater demand whenever any sort of an emergency arose.

"Send for Todd," was a favorite phrase among his friends.

It was no wonder that Kit turned towards him in her trouble.

"First of all," he began when he saw her worried face, "when did you get up this morning?"

"At six o'clock," replied Kit almost tearfully.

"Then you must be hungry."

"I am. I'm almost starved."

"Then the first thing is food," said Todd. "Can't hunt for lost girls on an empty tummy."

"But it seems so heartless to talk of food when

the twins may have been kidnapped or murdered," protested Kit.

"Nonsense; you don't really believe that," said Todd. "They've probably gone to the Statler. We'll go to the cafeteria there and then we'll hunt for them."

"I'm hungry," said Janet at almost the same moment in their room at the Statler, "let's go to that nice cafeteria we saw on the way in."

"Let's," agreed Phyllis heartily. "Jan, what will the boys say when they hear of this?"

"I tremble to think. They probably won't let us out of their sight ever again," replied Janet laughing. "I think I can see Peter's face when he gets the telegram that Kit is probably sending this minute."

"Well, come on; let's eat and then go out and explore the town," said Phyllis. "I'm not going home until I see Niagara Falls anyway."

They went downstairs and turned to the right towards the entrance of the cafeteria just as Kit and Todd came in through the other door.

Todd put Kit in a seat with her back to the door and came over to the counter where he met the twins face to face beside the pies.

Keen observation had made Todd the clever newspaper man that he was, and the moment he saw the twins his brain clicked, and he held out his long, slender hand.

"Hello, Twins," he said grinning. "How does it feel to be lost in the big city?"

"Where's Kit?" demanded the twins together.

"Over there in that corner. See her?" Todd pointed to Kit's back and the twins rushed over to her.

"Kit, why didn't you meet us?" demanded Janet foolishly.

"Twins!" exclaimed Kit, "where did you come from? Meet you! I've been meeting you for the last ten years. I went to both stations. I thought you were lost or stolen or something. I was just going to send a wire to Mr. Gibbs to see if you'd started. Which station were you at?"

"Blest if we know, we came in from Boston, and when you weren't there we drove over to another station, and you weren't there either, so we came along here," Phyllis explained at great length.

"Boston! I thought you were coming from

New York and I bet we passed each other on the way changing stations," exclaimed Kit.

"Sort of puss in corner," suggested Todd. "This will make a great newspaper story along with your first impressions of Buffalo."

"I didn't know Buffalo was big enough to have more than one station," confessed Janet, "but I see it's a regular city."

"Thanks, Miss New Yorker," drawled Kit.

"But tell us, how's Winny and all the girls. Lorry was so sorry she couldn't come. I think at the last minute she would have left Jimmy to be with us."

"Wish she had," said Kit, "the party's not complete without her."

"How are Mabs and David?" demanded Janet.

"Oh, very sad," said Kit. "Mab's mother says she can't spare her only daughter to be married for years and David's father says marriage will interfere with his career. So there you are."

"Oh, what a shame!" sighed Phyllis, and Janet added, "nothing will keep those two apart."

Meanwhile Todd was busy supplying them

with food and playing the waiter with many flourishes.

"Here's salad," he announced. "Girls live on salad, I know, but what do you want that's really filling?"

"Baked beans," said Janet as if suddenly inspired, and Todd brought her baked beans.

After luncheon, which was a merry meal, they wandered out into the sunshine and looked at the McKinley monument.

"Must take them for a ride up Delaware Avenue," said Todd. "It wouldn't look well in print unless they said something about the trees."

They walked several blocks to where the car was parked. Janet got in front with Kit, and Phyllis found herself in the rumble seat with Todd.

All the way up the beautiful avenue, with its stately lines of trees, Todd acted as guide and pointed out places of interest.

"That's the house where McKinley was shot," he announced, grandly pointing to a big house on the right-hand side.

"He was not," denied Janet, who knew her

history, "he was shot out at the fairgrounds."

"Well, he died there and I thought it would make it more interesting if I said he was shot there," confessed Todd.

"You're all wrong; that was the house where Roosevelt took the oath of office," said Kit.

"What a poor newspaper woman you'd make Kit," complained Todd. "You have so little imagination."

They drove through the park and stopped to pay tribute to Michelangelo's statue which is so like its original in Florence that it made the girls homesick and silent for a few minutes.

Kit showed them their town house, which faced the park, and then turned her car in the opposite direction, heading for the lake shore. They dropped Todd at his office and he teased them about the story he was going to write.

"Will he?" asked Janet, when they were all three in the front seat, speeding through the ugliest part of Buffalo.

"Of course he will, he knows I adore to see my name in print," Kit answered, speeding the car up just a little bit more.

CHAPTER VIII

AT KIT'S

THE St. John cottage was a low, rambling house that looked much smaller than it was. It was white with light green trimming for the shutters, and the girls recognized on the front door the knocker that Kit had bought in Florence.

At the sound of their car on the driveway, the door burst open and Mabs and Winny and Joan and Maud Howard dashed down the front steps and almost got run over in their attempt to greet the twins.

"Angels, we're so glad to see you," Winny began and kissed them both soundly.

"All we need is Lorry to make the party complete," said Joan. "What a shame she couldn't come!"

"And Miss Wicks," laughed Janet, "I'm surprised you have forgotten her."

"Oh," groaned Kit, "the life that woman led me after you left us."

"Every time Kit wanted to talk to Mario, Wicky would appear on the horizon and start speaking Latin to him," explained Winny.

"Children, children, come in the house at once, and don't keep your guests talking there," came a worried voice from the doorway, and the girls looked up to see Mrs. St. John, a slender little woman who seemed to be always flurried and nervous and who was completely dominated by her strong-minded daughter. She complained about it a good deal, but she never seemed to be able to get the upper hand in her household.

The girls got down from the car and permitted the twins to get out. They greeted their hostess with the charm for which they were famous, and she fell in love with both of them at once.

"Girls, do come in and tell me how Kit really behaved when she was with you. Miss Wicks gave me such a garbled account."

"Mrs. St. John," said Janet with her sweetest smile, "Kit didn't do a thing that I wouldn't have been proud to have a daughter of mine do."

"Oh, dear," sighed Mrs. St. John, "I'm afraid you're prejudiced."

"Come on, girls, let me show you your rooms. We have not put you together, because Winny wanted Phyllis and I wanted Jan. We've got so much to pour into your sympathetic ears. You don't mind, do you? Being separated, I mean," explained Kit.

Now the twins did mind, but, of course, they couldn't show it, so they smiled and said it was a good plan, and the girls left them in connecting rooms.

Phyllis sauntered into Janet's room a little later.

"So you wouldn't mind a child of yours falling into the Grand Canal, wouldn't you?" she asked teasingly.

"Oh, I didn't add that, if she were mine, I'd give her a sound spanking. Maybe I'll get to that later on, but Mrs. St. John seems positively afraid of the child."

"I know, and how dreadfully changed Mabs is; she hardly said a word. I'm curious to meet her mother, perhaps—" and Phyllis let the rest of the sentence go.

"Phyl, there you go managing again," laughed Janet, taking off her blouse and going over towards the washstand.

"I know, but I hate to see people unhappy, and I did like David Channing, though he was more your pet than mine," returned Phyllis, as she went back to her own room.

They changed into white dresses made of the sheerest linen and hemstitched by hand. They both looked very pretty and not a day older than the other girls when they rejoined them later downstairs.

"We're going over to Mabs's house for dinner," explained Kit when they were all seated on the broad piazza, Kit and Winny on the railing and the rest in comfortable deck chairs.

It reminded the girls of their trip on the boat and, of course, their thoughts turned to the day that Kit and Winny disappeared.

"Wicky told mother all about it, *of course*," laughed Kit. "Poor Mum was horrified, but Dad thought it a huge joke. By the way," she broke off abruptly, "Mario is coming over in the autumn with his mother and poor mum is having a fit at the thought of entertaining a real

countess. Too bad Mario isn't a prince; then there would be a riot."

Janet and Phyllis were getting used to Kit's calling her mother "poor mum" but they didn't like it. It showed, not disrespect, but a lack of respect that seemed too bad between a mother and daughter. They were forced to admit, however, that it was Mrs. St. John's fault. She should have kept a strong hold over Kit, instead of which she let her do just as she liked.

Mabs was sitting in the corner, gazing into space and her eyes held infinite sadness in their blue depths. She looked up and smiled at the twins.

"It's nice of you to come to my house first," she said, but she sounded listless.

"Where is your house?" asked Phyllis, and Mabs pointed to a clump of trees across the road and a little away from the lake.

"It's in that bunch of trees," she said. "It is white and it has a blue door."

"Oh, what fun," exclaimed Janet, "I always wanted to live in a house with a blue door. I say, Mabs, let's go for a little walk. I want to talk to you," and Janet got up and went towards

the steps. Mabs joined her and they linked arms.

Before them stretched Lake Erie. It was not a blue lake even with the blue sky above it, but rather a threatening gray, and it rippled in the wind. It was an early spring, but the ice had only just melted and the lake itself looked very cold and forbidding.

"Our lake doesn't smile the way the Mediterranean did, does it?" asked Mabs with a soft sadness in her voice.

"No, it looks angry," Janet replied and then they fell into a deep silence which Janet finally broke.

"Tell me about David," she said gently.

Mabs gave a funny little laugh without any happiness in it.

"There's nothing to tell, Jan," she said. "Mother doesn't want me to leave her, and I suppose my duty is here and—and—she doesn't like David."

"Is there anything that I can do about it?" Janet asked.

Mabs seemed to consider for a few minutes, then she lifted her head and said distinctly:

"Yes, there is. Say something to Mother that is nice about David. I want her to see that other people like him."

"Of course," said Janet, and she said it with great understanding.

Her brain was busy with plans. She wanted to bring David and Mabs together but how to do it, short of telling Mrs. Southie that she was a very selfish woman, she did not see.

"Well, it will have to wait until I see the mother," she said to herself, but she took Mabs's arm comfortingly and the two walked up the beach in silence.

"I'm afraid the others will want you back again; it's almost tea time and I must be going home to see that the table is arranged for to-night. Our Polack isn't a very clever waitress, and she is apt to put the forks on the butter plates if you don't watch her," Mabs laughed. It was the first care-free laugh in months, and she wondered at herself when she heard it.

They returned to the porch just in time to see the tea wagon wheeled out and Kit spring up from her place on the porch railing to do the honors.

After tea the twins managed to get a word together, and Janet explained how the conversation must run at dinner.

"First," she said, "we must make a hit by being our most charming selves to Mrs. Southie, and then we must begin on David. We won't rave exactly but we'll enthuse strongly."

"Horrid word, 'enthuse.' Do you know it's not in the dictionary, in fact, it's not a word," said Phyllis; but her mind was on what Janet had just said.

"Who'll start it, you or I?" Janet wanted to know.

"Something had better remind us of Pompeii and the rest will be easy," said Phyllis.

Just then Kit joined them with a long face.

"Isn't it rotten luck? Todd Briggs can't come tonight and I've just got to find out some one to take his place. Oh, anyway, come in and meet Dad," she added, and ushered them into the living room where a man in a golfing suit rose to meet them. He was a large man and he had a lazy, good-natured smile. He held out both hands to the girls.

"Hello, Mrs. Twins," he said heartily.

"Dad, was there anybody at the club today that I could ask in place of Todd Briggs? He can't come, has to cover a stupid fire in town," said Kit, her brows puckered in a frown.

Her father considered.

"Old Tommy Hunter is back from Europe," he said grinning.

"Oh, hurrah," cried Kit, "he's the very one." She turned to the girls, "He used to be sweet on Mrs. Southie and he always kisses her hand. It's a scream to watch him; he's so fat and funny."

"Hmm," drawled Phyllis, "it seems to me I saw a certain person kiss hands all around and you didn't laugh then."

"Oh, Mario is a law unto himself," retorted Kit and her father chuckled.

Janet said nothing; her brain was positively reeling with plans.

CHAPTER IX

JANET SPEAKS HER MIND

PRESERVED cherries led the conversation around to the Amalfi drive at dinner that night and gave the twins the opening they wanted.

Mr. Hunter had accepted the last-minute invitation gladly, and the twins had seen him kiss Mrs. Southie's hand and they thought it rather sweet. He was sitting at the end of the table with a twin on either side of him. Next to Janet, on the right, sat Buddie Cole. Next to him, Joan Howard, with a boy from Cornell who didn't seem to have a name but was called P. T., but whether that was his name or whether it stood for Physical Training Janet couldn't guess and Phyllis didn't bother to. Next to him sat Winny, her glorious red hair set off to perfection by a dress of shell pink.

At the head of the table between Winny and

Kit sat Mrs. Southie. "Between her two pets," as she called the two younger girls. Next to Kit sat a big, fat boy who looked very solemn and paid strict attention to his food. Kit teased him unmercifully and was rewarded mostly by grunts. Maud Howard sat beside him and then came Avery Renwick, the one boy in the world to whom Mrs. Southie would give up Mabs, and whom Mabs looked upon with loathing. She sat on his right and was hardly civil to him, but spent most of her time talking to Slim Wilder, who sat next to Phyllis.

There was really no head or foot to the table, for it was round, but Mrs. Southie and Mr. Hunter, being the only two grown-ups there, gave the semblance of head and foot.

Had Mrs. Southie had any idea where her innocent little dish of preserved cherries was going to lead the conversation, she would never have even preserved them. The ball started at Janet's end of the table.

"Do you remember David stopping us from drinking that water and buying us cherries to take its place," she began.

"Dear David, he was always so thoughtful

and wise," Phyllis put her oar in and made quite a splash, for Kit, who was bored from across the table, demanded to know about whom she was talking.

"David Channing," Janet replied to her question.

"Oh," said Kit, and a dead silence fell on the whole table.

Mrs. Southie tried to change the subject, but Janet wouldn't have it.

"How nice he always was to Miss Wicks," she said regardless of construction.

"And how brainy he was—the way he could reel off Latin," Phyllis came to the aid of her twin.

"My, my, that sounds brainy indeed," laughed Mr. Hunter, "who was this young man?"

"Oh, one of the finest," Janet explained. "We met him in Pompeii and he was our guide through the rest of Italy. A thoroughly splendid fellow and so well connected. His father was a professor in ——" naming one of the biggest colleges in the country.

"Don't believe them, Tom. He was a thor-

oughly unprincipled young man," snapped Mrs. Southie, flushing angrily.

"Oh, Mrs. Southie, how can you say such a thing," blazed Janet. "You may not have liked David personally, but you simply can't call him unprincipled."

"I consider he did a very deceitful thing in falling in love with my daughter behind my back," answered Mrs. Southie with a sniff.

Then Mr. Hunter did a most unexpected thing: he took sides against Mrs. Southie, a thing he had never been known to do before.

"I think your judgment was warped, my dear. He sounds like a very estimable young man," he said positively.

Mabs shot him a look of almost adoration and then Phyllis came to the rescue.

"Did some one say we were going to the club to dance tonight?" she inquired, and everyone at the table turned to her and told her that that was exactly what they were doing.

Phyllis looked at Mr. Hunter with one of her sweetest smiles, "I do hope you are going to ask me for the first dance," she said.

"Oh—why, yes—why I'd be delighted," said Mr. Hunter, knowing he was breaking a custom of years. He always danced with Mrs. Southie first, and she took it as her due.

"Then I claim the next one," Janet said laughingly, and looking up at the poor man with such a glance that he succumbed at once.

"Hey, where do we come in?" demanded Slim Wilder. "We can't have Uncle Tom cutting us all out."

"Oh, he did that hours ago," laughed Phyllis, and Mrs. Southie at the end of the table came to the conclusion that she disliked the twins heartily. They had been rude, it was quite true, as they had been guilty of rudeness to their hostess, but it had been in such a good cause. One look at Mabs's face showed it was worth it.

The dinner was, of course, spoiled; everyone was afraid to talk for fear of bringing the conversation back to David Channing. Everyone seemed upset except the twins, who went on gayly with their dinner and appeared to notice nothing wrong.

As soon as possible they left for the club. There they found a lot of other young people

and were swallowed up in the music and confusion. True to his promise, Mr. Hunter danced the first dance with Phyllis.

"Tell me more about this David Channing," he said, as he danced her around to the strains of an old-fashioned waltz.

Phyllis puckered her brows, "I'm not running it," she said at last. "It's Janet's show; she just told me to stand by."

"Is that the way you work things?" Mr. Hunter asked, amused. "It's a great system."

Janet had been dancing the first dance with Mr. St. John, and they had been discussing the case of Mabs and David quite frankly, and Mr. St. John let it be known that he thought it was a miserable shame and all Mrs. Southie's fault.

Janet met Mabs looking radiant after the dance was over, and Mabs said to her as they went to join Phyllis:

"My mind is all made up; I'm going to elope with David."

Janet only squeezed her hand and had the next dance with Mr. Hunter. Before they were halfway round the room, Janet had told him all about it and ended with:

"Oh, if some one only wanted to marry Mrs. Southie! It could be settled that way."

"But, my dear child, I have wanted to marry Mrs. Southie for years. She is quite the only woman I ever loved, but her devotion to her daughter has always stood between us."

"Hum," said Janet, "maybe I can remove that."

After the dance was over Mrs. Southie was surprised to see Janet coming towards her.

"That horrid girl," she said to herself and pursed her mouth up in a disapproving line.

Janet sat down beside her and said in her sweetest manner, "May I sit and talk to you for a while, Mrs. Southie? I'm tired of dancing."

Mrs. Southie moved aside ungraciously and said with an attempt at scorn:

"What, tired already?"

Janet nodded. "Mrs. Southie," she said suddenly and without leading up to it, "did you notice how happy Mabs is tonight?"

"Why, I can't say that I noticed anything in particular. She's dancing with Avery and that

ought to make her happy; he's devoted to her."

"No, it isn't Avery, it's David," said Janet decidedly. "She's made up her mind to marry him, I think."

"You dreadful girl, why do you try to frighten me?" demanded Mrs. Southie.

"Come now," replied Janet, "I'm not trying to frighten you. I am trying to talk sense to you. Wouldn't it be better to give in to your daughter gracefully than to have her elope? And Mrs. Southie, there are plenty of people to help her if she wants to do that."

"Are you threatening me?" demanded Mrs. Southie, now purple with rage. "Would you turn a child against her mother?"

"There are times," began Janet quietly, "when mothers are the unreasonable ones. It doesn't happen often, as usually a girl is more sensible in obeying her mother than not, but there are times when mothers can be selfish as you are being now. You have nothing against David Channing. You just don't want to lose Mabs, and that's standing right in the way of her happiness."

By now Mrs. Southie was dissolved in tears and all she could murmur was:

"I don't have to be told my duty by a child like you."

Janet got up and sighed. "Then I shall tell Mabs she can count on my help when she elopes," she said severely, and just then Todd Briggs came up to her and demanded a dance.

"Did you get your newspaper story finished?" Janet asked him.

"Yes, it was a nifty little fire," he replied grinning. "Say, you are all grown up and everything, yet you look younger than all these girls here tonight. That goes for your twin, too. I don't know which is which."

"Don't," said Janet and her voice trembled ever so slightly, "I feel a hundred. Don't let's talk; let's dance."

"All right with me," said Todd and he whirled her out into the middle of the floor.

CHAPTER X

A STRANGE MEETING

THEY were all at breakfast the next morning when Mabs came over. It was a new Mabs, a joyous Mabs, who greeted them and went over and stood by Janet's chair.

The conversation had been about Peter and English and the possibility of their coming up for the week-end.

"I think it would be delightful to have them motor up and take you back," said Mrs. St. John, handing Phyllis her second cup of coffee.

"Oh," began Mabs shyly, "do you think they'd stop in Boston and pick up David? I'm going to telegraph him to come today for the week-end."

The rest looked at her in amazed silence, and then Kit said roughly:

"Tell us what's happened or I'll wring your neck, standing there like a sphinx when we're all

bursting with curiosity. Spill it, divulge, give over!"

"Oh, don't, Kit. I'm embarrassed to death," pleaded Mabs. "It's only that Mother is going to marry Tommy Hunter and she withdraws all opposition to my marrying David, and I know whom I have to thank for it, too," and she looked fondly at Janet.

Janet gave a deep sigh of relief. Her talk had not been in vain, though she knew she would have had little success without the aid of Mr. Hunter. She found herself being very sorry for Mr. Hunter. He seemed to deserve a better fate than Mrs. Southie. Still he was getting what he wanted and that was everything in this world. She came back from her dreaming in time to hear them planning a trip to Niagara Falls to celebrate what Kit insisted upon calling "Mabs's engagement."

"Mother always thinks that my guests want to go to Niagara Falls no matter how many times they have been there already. Do you want to go, Twins?" she asked, looking from one twin to the other and not perfectly sure she knew which was which.

"Absolutely positive," laughed Phyllis. "I don't know why you people who live so near one of the wonders of the world always talk about it as though it were some little side show that really ought to be looked at because it's there, when to the rest of us it's a rare treat."

"That's the way I like to hear a girl speak about our Falls," said Mr. St. John from behind his newspaper. "Kit and the rest are much too blasé."

"I know, darling, but it's such an old story," said Kit, who was not one whit abashed by her father's last remark.

"How can it be?" asked Maud Howard from her place at the other end of the table, "I'd never get tired of looking at it."

"Besides we ought to see America first," put in Joan sententiously.

"We'll go over the new bridge," said Kit resignedly. "That ought to give you a thrill; it was opened by the Prince of Wales."

"The darling," said Winny who went through ramifications of "I knew a——" and ended up "who danced with the Prince of Wales!"

"What about the boys—are you going to take

them along or just go by yourselves?" asked Mrs. St. John, whose mind was full of sandwiches and who hoped devoutly that the party would not include the boys.

"Let's have it just to ourselves, the way it was in Italy," suggested Phyllis. "I'll be Miss Wicks."

"Oh, yes, let's," said Kit, who a moment ago would have scorned the very idea of a party without the boys.

"Where's your gold-handled umbrella?" drawled Mabs, quite her old self.

"*'Veni, vedi, vici,'* or words to that effect," said Phyllis. "Now, girls, I think it would be profitable to spend the morning in the ruins. Mr. Channing, *'omnes divisa in partes tres.'*"

"Oh, if he were only here," sighed Mabs with so much feeling that the rest laughed heartlessly.

"Let's go and send those telegrams," suggested Janet. "I'll wear my new sports suit to celebrate the occasion."

"Will you wear yours, too?" asked Mrs. St. John of Phyllis.

"Why, certainly, the twins must be dressed

alike at all times," Phyllis replied, following her twin from the room.

"I like those girls and I'm anxious to meet their husbands," said Mr. St. John, holding out his cup for the fourth time.

"Oh, older people always like the twins. Why even Wicky liked them, and the old Contessa adored them," said Kit.

"I know one older person who doesn't like them," laughed Mabs. "I left Mother still talking about that dreadful twin person."

"Bet you anything you like she likes them before they go," put in Joan and Maud nodded her head wisely.

"Well, I've got to get the car," exclaimed Kit. "Coming, Win?"

They sent off the telegrams and came back to the house to pick up the basket of luncheon, and Mabs got her car out and took Janet and Joan with her on the front seat while the rest rode with Kit.

They went through the back door into Buffalo and to the front where they crossed the bridge and were held up until Kit could show her license and then with a "They'll be giving

them to babes in arms next," the customs official let them through.

Once on the other side they tore along at a breakneck speed, for that is the way Kit always drove.

"I like seeing it from the Canadian side best," said Winny, "but of course the center of the bridge at Niagara is the best place."

"Let's blindfold Joan and Maud and lead them there," suggested Kit, as she stopped her car to tell the others the decision.

It was promptly acted upon and when the cars slowed up at a parking space on the side of the road an occupant of each had her eyes bandaged with a silk scarf.

The customs inspector was doubtful about letting them through.

"What is this, a game?" he inquired.

Kit explained to him and they left him scratching his head and chuckling to himself.

Everybody turned to look at the procession, but mercifully it was too early for many tourists, and they had the bridge practically to themselves.

Once in the middle of it, they took off the

blindfolds and the girls stood with all the glory of the Falls before them: the rapids rushing down to the sheer drop before them and then the torrent of water over the fall and the breath-taking beauty of the spray that is sent back to catch the brilliance of the sunshine and reflect it in its rainbow.

Everybody was properly impressed but Kit, who yawned affectedly and suggested hunting a place to have lunch.

"Kit, I could shake you. This takes me back to our wedding trip; remember, Phyl?" Janet asked.

"Yes, darling, I was just thinking if the boys came we must come up here with them."

"What! two trips to the Falls in one summer! It can't be done," announced Kit, "you honeymooners can go and take Mabs and David along with you, but don't expect me to go."

"Catch her being left behind," drawled Mabs and Winny agreed.

"Come on, let's eat," said Kit, changing the subject.

They decided that Goat Island was the proper place for a picnic and went back to the cars.

They selected a spot near the rapids and were just going to get out their baskets when they noticed a forlorn figure sitting with her back to them and, at the same moment that the girls hesitated, Phyllis noticed a gold-handled umbrella. The shoulders shook and it was evident that the woman was in tears.

"Girls, it's Miss Wicks, and she's crying," she said. "Come on up and meet her and pretend not to notice it.

"Why, Miss Wicks, how do you do?" she exclaimed cordially, and the rest would have followed had not Miss Wicks done a most curious thing.

She threw herself in Phyllis's arms and cried and cried.

"Why, Miss Wicks, what is the matter?" Phyllis demanded and set about soothing the elder woman.

"Yes, yes, I must calm myself," said Miss Wicks between sobs, "but when I saw you, it was a direct answer to prayer. I had thought to myself not two minutes before 'now if Phyllis or Janet were here they would know what to do,' " and she sniffed pathetically.

"Tell me all about it," said Phyllis. "Look, here are the rest. They want to say 'how do you do,' too."

They all shook hands with her until it came Kit's turn, and suddenly she was in her arms and hugging her hard.

"Oh, Wicky, I'm so glad to see you," she exclaimed, "and you seem to be in trouble. Tell us what's the matter."

"Oh, my dear, my dear," Miss Wicks replied, "I am in sore trouble, indeed."

"Tell us," chorused the rest.

"I thought that this summer I should devote myself to America, so I said I would take a party of girls to Yellowstone." Miss Wicks began in a fluttery voice. "I was highly recommended to a select girls' school and a party was made up of five young ladies; no, I will not call them ladies, young persons they are. I bring them to Niagara Falls and they decide I am too old-fashioned for them and they run off in a hired car. Goodness knows where they have gone. The chauffeur has just left me to notify the police. He says they can't get back to the United States, something about the license, but they have the

whole of Canada to ride in and they have plenty of money. Here comes the chauffeur. I don't like him. He was most abusive when he found his car was stolen."

"Oh, he was, was he?" demanded Kit, valiantly. "Well, I'll talk to him this time," and she walked up to the approaching man.

"Look here, my friend, Miss Wicks, is among friends now and you'll keep a civil tongue in your head, do you quite understand?" she fairly blazed and the man looked completely subdued.

"Yes, miss," he said respectfully.

No news had been heard of the car that the girls had started away in. Kit suddenly jumped up and put her arm around Miss Wicks.

"Don't you worry, Wicky, I'll find them. What is the number of it?"

The chauffeur told her and explained the spot on the Canadian side where they had parked. Kit nodded and went to her own car. The others watched her go with a forlorn hope that she might find the fugitives and then turned their attentions on Miss Wicks and the need of cheering her up.

"No tellin' what they'll do to my car," said

the driver crossly. "That youngest one was a terror."

"That was Molly and she is a dreadful child. Oh, dear, this will unfit me for ever taking parties away again," and the poor lady dissolved into a long sob.

"Here comes Kit, and she's got a car full of girls," remarked Joan casually.

"Is my car all right?" demanded the driver before Kit had stopped.

Nobody paid any attention to him, however; they were all concentrating on Kit.

"Now then, get out, all of you, and do what I told you to and make it snappy," she ordered and the girls, looking very much ashamed of themselves, went over to Miss Wicks and apologized one by one.

That over, Kit once more took things into her own hands and insisted on Miss Wicks joining her party for supper. They ate while the other girls sat at a distance and grumbled among themselves.

"I'd get rid of them, Wicky, as fast as I could. They are not the girls for you. Ship them right back to their homes; they're common," decided

Kit, looking at the girls seated a little distance away as if they were just that many slugs in the road.

"Oh, I will, I will, Kit, I promise you that," said Miss Wicks.

After they had escorted Miss Wicks to her hotel and her girls had followed in the other car, they fell silent on the way home.

Finally Phyllis asked, "Kit, what made you do it? You never used to be fond of Miss Wicks."

"I guess I was, down inside," said Kit thoughtfully, "anyway I do like her and I'll just naturally beat up anybody that ever imitates her or makes fun of her gold-headed umbrella again," and having delivered this ultimatum Kit drove furiously.

Miss Wicks, back in her hotel with her charges all under lock and key, said her prayers devoutly and added, "God bless those dear girls and God please especially bless Kit."

CHAPTER XI

DAVID AND MABS

THE house party continued with all the enthusiasm that was characteristic of Kit. There were parties given by her friends and dances at the country club, where the twins continued to dance with Tommy Hunter, and Mrs. Southie continued to speak of "that dreadful twin." But all of the good times were only leading up to Friday, the day of days, when Peter and English and David were motoring up to Buffalo. The boys had gotten into communication with David and had invited him to sit in their rumble seat. He had agreed with flattering alacrity.

Friday morning dawned cold and drizzly and there seemed nothing in the world to do but wait. Mrs. St. John wanted a fire and there were willing hands to go and get the wood for her. A cheery fire was soon blazing in the grate and

the girls sat around it do-you-remembering.

"I know what we need," exclaimed Maud, stretching out one slim ankle to the blaze and regarding it with pleasure.

"I don't think we need a thing," remarked Joan. "We're awfully comfy just as we are."

"As long as it doesn't make me move, I'm for it," said Kit.

"What is it?" demanded Winny, who was always curious.

"Marshmallows," announced Maud.

Kit gave a long sigh. "Now you've done it," she exclaimed; "peace is over for everybody. We'll all think of marshmallows until somebody can't stand it another minute and goes off and gets them. Hello, there's Mabs. Wonder if we couldn't press her into service. Come in, darling, we have need of you."

Mabs came in and stood beside Janet. "Jan," she said speaking frankly but in an undertone, "I want to see David alone when he comes, can you fix it for me?"

"Will, somehow," promised Janet and they left it at that. Mabs turned to the others.

"Now what do you want me to do?" she asked.

"Bring us marshmallows, we want marshmallows," sang the rest in chorus, and Mabs looked at them in her dreamy way and finally laughed.

"Why, we have a whole tin of them over at the house, anybody who wants to go over for them is welcome," and she settled herself comfortably on the arm of Janet's chair.

"Oh," Kit groaned, "that's what I get for being a hostess. I suppose I'll have to go and get them."

"Atta girl," said Win.

"Oh, come on with me," Kit appealed to them all but more especially to her best friend, who jumped up quickly.

"All right, angel child, I'll come with you," Win said, and got up and stretched.

They were gone several minutes and came back grinning like Cheshire cats.

"Here they are," said Kit and she gave them a plate with a few marshmallows on it, "and here are the sticks we use," and she handed them a couple of sticks with long points.

Then she and Winny disappeared into the dining room where there was another fire going.

The others ate the few marshmallows in silence and looked about for more.

"I know there was a whole box full," said Mabs.

"I smell a rat," said Phyllis and she left her chair and crept softly to the door.

Once there she beckoned the others and they came and looked over her shoulder. What they saw made them tiptoe grimly back to their seats by the fire.

"Something must be done about this," said Janet, for they had seen Kit and Winny on the floor, a pointed stick in each hand and a big box of marshmallows between them.

"Let's enlist Mrs. St. John on our side," said Phyllis and she left the room on tiptoe, this time going to the kitchen. She came back with a broad grin and a box of popcorn and a popcorn shaker and a dish of butter and balanced on top of all this, the salt shaker.

It was all right until the corn began to pop. Then Kit in the other room held up her head and began to listen.

"What's going on in there?" she demanded of Win.

"Sounds like they were popping corn," she replied. "Come on, let's see."

"Not a mouthful for either one of you," said Kit's mother, standing in the doorway of the kitchen. "Don't give it to them, girls," she said, laughing gently.

After awhile an exchange was made and the girls got the marshmallows in exchange for a popper full of corn. Peace was restored and was not interrupted until early in the afternoon when Janet received a wire. It came from Peter and read:

GET MABS AND MEET US AT THE STATLER IN
TIME FOR TEA IMPORTANT DAVID SEE HER BEFORE
REACHING HER HOME

PETER

"There's something somebody else wants as well as you, Mabs," and she showed Mabs the wire first and then passed it along to Kit.

Kit settled the difficulty at once.

"Take my car and Phyllis can drive it, I wouldn't trust it to Jan——"

"You're a wise child," put in Janet.

"—and Mabs can go from here. There's no use fussing Mrs. Southie all up about it, is there, Mum?" and she appealed to her mother.

"I think I can make it all right with Mrs. Southie," she said slowly. "I'll drop over to the house for something and just mention casually that you girls are going down to meet the boys. I wouldn't like her not to know."

"Isn't my mother the young budding diplomat?" asked Kit proudly.

That was the way it was arranged and Mabs went over home to dress for the great occasion.

The boys were waiting for them in the Hotel Statler lobby and with them stood David Channing, a little bit more grown up and not quite so sure of himself as when they had seen him before.

"Told you they'd make it," said English, as he walked eagerly forward to greet Phyllis. He was followed by Peter, who held out both hands to Janet.

They did not have tea together, for the twins and their husbands sat in one corner of the dining room and David, with Mabs looking adoringly at him, sat in another.

"Then your mother really consents, darling?" asked David tenderly.

Mabs nodded happily, then a scowl passed over her lovely face. "But what about your father?" she said.

"Oh, it's all right with Dad. You see, I have a young uncle who has taken my part and persuaded Dad that it's all right. Anyway, I've a position offered me at college and, though the salary is small, we'll be able to get along, won't we?" David as he said this looked at Mabs beseechingly.

"Of course we shall," Mabs agreed. "It will be such fun being poor with you. Do you suppose we shall ever save up for a trip abroad again?"

"Oh, absolutely!" said David, his heart struggling over his common sense.

At last, Janet decided it was time to go home, and they packed Mabs and David off in Kit's car, while they led the way in Peter's.

Mrs. Southie was on the front porch to greet them and beside her stood Kit and Winny.

"How do you do, David?" she said coldly, but her greeting was lost in the heartiness of the

two girls who all but embraced him. Not lost to David, however, and realizing that first impressions were very important, he said, with just the right amount of feeling:

"Mrs. Southie, I can never thank you for your generosity in letting me come up. You and I must have a long talk. You are so fair minded that I'm sure it will end a pleasant talk."

Mrs. Southie was not averse to flattery and she smiled a trifle unwillingly. Tommy Hunter put in his appearance at just the moment when things were becoming strained.

"Hello, there," he greeted them all. "Where is the future bridegroom?"

"I hope I am, sir," laughed David and the ice was broken.

That night they went over to the club and danced, and Tommy Hunter had the first dance with Mrs. Southie and that lady cast a glance of triumph at the twins, who were both perfectly happy, for Phyllis was dancing with English and Janet with Peter.

CHAPTER XII

MORE HOUSE PARTY

NOW what'll we do?" Kit appeared at the breakfast table in a scowling mood.

The sun was definitely under a cloud and a persistent drizzle beat against the windowpane. Everything was clammy and cold and the day stretched out before her in forlorn hours to be filled somehow, for the picnic was perforce given up.

"Don't look so black, little thundercloud," said English. "I have an idea. The girls are to entertain the boys this evening with tableaux or something like that, give a play or charades or something and let us be the judges."

Kit withered him with a glance, "I think it would be lots nicer if you boys were to entertain us," she said.

English looked at the boys who had strolled in for breakfast. There was David Channing,

spreading Mabs's toast with marmalade; Avery Renwick, looking on like a thundercloud; the fat and pudgy Jack Hotchkiss, who was spreading marmalade for himself, and Slim Wilder, who was toying with a piece of toast. Todd Briggs had not put in an appearance as yet.

Peter was there, of course, and it was to him that English spoke.

"Do we take up the challenge?" he asked solemnly, and as solemnly Peter and David replied, "We do."

"How can we entertain a bunch of girls?" demanded Slim. "I think we'd better go on the picnic; a little rain won't hurt us."

"No, let's do what English says," said David. "We'll have to hold a meeting and make some plans."

"Jack, if you would only stop eating, you could hold it now. We'll leave you the dining room," said Kit unkindly.

"What's the sense of my stopping if we are going to stay here. I can eat and plan too," and he helped himself deliberately to another piece of toast and a huge helping of jam.

"Come on; let's go into the living room and

leave them to themselves," suggested Janet, and the girls all rose and followed her to the other room where they crowded around the open fire that was crackling on the hearth.

Left to themselves, the boys put their heads together and every now and then a chuckle punctuated their talk.

They joined the girls an hour later and announced that they were all going downtown.

"Well, pick up Todd Briggs while you're there," suggested Kit, just as her father, who had been out for his golf, in spite of the rain, came in the room.

"Well, children, what are you going to do on this miserable day?" he asked. "I bet the twins have thought of something," and he smiled at Janet and Phyllis.

"Wrong guess, Daddy. It's the twins' husbands this time," said Kit.

"You see, sir, it's contagious. We find ourselves getting ideas, too, sometimes," said Peter. "Only this time it's English who has had the brain wave. We are to entertain the girls this evening and he has thought of a novel way of doing it."

"I'll say it's novel," put in Slim.

"We'd like your assistance too, sir," said English, "and we must have Mr. Hunter."

"Fine; I'll call him at the club. I left him there grumbling over the morning paper. It's good of you to include us old fogies in your game," Mr. St. John went to the telephone in the other room.

"You can't all go downtown. Who's going to stay and amuse us?" demanded Mabs, hoping they would leave David behind, but he was as eager as the rest of them to be gone. English settled the matter by saying:

"We all have to go. If we are going to put on an entertainment for you tonight, you can jolly well amuse yourselves until then," and off they went in a body, filling three cars.

The girls sat silent after their departure. They were all gazing into the fire and their thoughts ran something like this:

"English is always ready when it comes to ideas," thought Phyllis, proudly.

"How well Peter and English and David get along," thought Janet, none the less proudly.

"How popular David is with the other boys,"

thought Mabs. "I'm glad he didn't stay home with me."

"I wish Slim were more attractive," thought Joan Howard.

"If only Jack didn't eat so much I might like him," thought her sister.

Winny's thoughts were a little sad. "If Todd only liked me as well as he likes Kit, I would be happy," they ran.

Kit's were undecided and, unlike the rest, they had nothing to do with boys. "I wonder what they'd do to me if I asked Wicky to come to-night. I think I'll chance it anyhow," and she went into the other room to the telephone.

When she came back, she looked like the cat who had swallowed the canary.

"Well, I've done it," she announced.

"Done what?" chorused the others.

"Wait and see," was all Kit had to say.

No one had bothered to think about poor Avery, who was at that moment trying to show some enthusiasm for English's crazy plan for entertainment.

"If the boys are going to amuse us, we ought to do something for them," said Janet. "I

know; let's have a picnic lunch here in front of the fire and broil steak over it and roast potatoes."

"The very thing!" exclaimed Winny, "and we'll have it at five o'clock, just as we planned for the picnic and anybody who gets hungry between now and then can root around in the ice box. Jack's sure to."

"Mother thought of taking us all over to the club for dinner, but I think your idea's better," said Kit. "I'll go find her and tell her about it."

She returned a few minutes later with her mother, who looked worried.

"I'm afraid you'll all have to help make the sandwiches. Etta is saying that it will take her till noon to wash up from breakfast and the cook is frightfully cross."

"Of course we'll help," exclaimed Phyllis, jumping up. "I'll dry the dishes and the rest of you can start the sandwiches."

In less time than it takes to tell it, the cook and the waitress were smiling and everybody was working busily in the kitchen.

The boys came home and immediately closeted themselves in the dining room with their various

bundles. After a few minutes of mutterings, the girls were listening at the door, Peter came out and shooed them away and called in Mrs. St. John. A few minutes later she came out and called up Mrs. Southie and begged her to come over and, for the rest of the afternoon, there were muffled shrieks from behind the closed door.

At four-thirty, much to everybody's surprise, Miss Wicks arrived. The girls greeted her with enthusiasm and Kit hugged her.

"I'll go get a friend of yours who will be more than delighted to see you," said Mabs, and she went off and knocked at the forbidden door.

She came back leading David by the hand, and Miss Wicks was so excited that she forgot her Latin and greeted him in English.

David was apparently delighted to see her, and told her all about Mabs and how they were going to be married in a year, and he insisted that she must come to the wedding and meet his father, who had heard so much about her that he was eager to see her.

"I always thought there would be a match between you two," said Miss Wicks archly. "I

feared it from the first, but now I am glad and I hope you don't think I was too unsympathetic on our trip. How nice it will be for you to teach Mabs Latin. She was never a very apt pupil with me, but I am sure you will be able to teach her successfully."

"Yes, we plan to spend many a long winter's evening helping Cæsar build his bridges," said David, gravely, giving a sly, sidelong glance at Mabs.

Mr. and Mrs. St. John came out to greet their guest, and Mrs. St. John said smiling:

"Can you sew, Miss Wicks?"

Miss Wicks was slightly surprised but she replied, smiling, too:

"Why, yes, I sew very well. My mother thought it one of the arts, and made me practice two hours a day so that I became quite proficient."

"Then do come with me and help. These boys are worse than useless. If I ever had a son, I should teach him to sew for just such an emergency," and Mrs. St. John carried Miss Wicks off to the dining room, nor would she permit one of the girls even a peep.

At five o'clock, they had to be hauled out to come to the picnic, and Peter and English took in trays to the three women who were too busy to come out. Every now and then Mrs. St. John would come to the door and call one of the boys in for something.

At seven o'clock everything was apparently finished. Mr. St. John had been doing a lot of telephoning with the aid and promptings of Mr. Hunter, and now they announced that the girls had better dress up, as the entertainment was going to be at the clubhouse.

Todd Briggs arrived and wanted to know if he were too late. Mrs. Southie said, "No, dear; we have it all ready for you."

"Let's hurry dressing, for if I don't find out what this is all about I'll blow up," said Joan.

"Our very best, I suppose, to honor the occasion," said Kit as they went to their various rooms to dress.

At eight o'clock they were all at the clubhouse and found the rooms lined with chairs and the stage curtain down. Members of the club strolled in to swell the audience until there were over fifty people in the room.

There was a sudden hush as Mr. St. John stepped before the curtain.

"Well, folks," he began, "all of you little people out there, we are going to try to amuse you. Imagine yourselves dear little children for whom this entertainment is gotten up. The first number on the program will be a charade. A word in two syllables."

The curtain rose and showed David and Todd and Slim sitting in comfortable chairs smoking pipes.

Said Todd, "I don't think much of this fellow English, do you?"

"I should say I didn't; he's the very end of the limit," replied David. "He brought me up here in his rickety motor car and nearly turned me inside out."

"And he never has an idea in his head," said Slim; "makes a fellow do all his thinking for him."

"Slam," said somebody in the audience.

"How horrid of them," laughed Phyllis.

Mr. St. John came before the curtain.

"We shall now do the second syllable," he announced.

Peter entered, leading Avery by the hand. Avery was pretending to be blind. Peter seated him in a chair, passed his hands over his eyes several times and Avery jumped up and shouted, "I can see, I can see."

It was very obvious and a voice from the audience called out:

"Slamsee, only there isn't such a word."

"Now we shall give the whole word," said Mr. St. John, "and we hope you will all appreciate the artistry with which it is given. We took great pains with it and we are justly proud."

Out walked English, but such an English. He was attired in a crêpe paper costume with a big pansy sewed to the front of it and one between his shoulders. On his head was a ridiculous cap with a wreath of pansies around the crown. He hopped, skipped and jumped across the stage and threw kisses to the audience, who were in convulsions.

"Pansy," they shouted, and English sank into an elaborate curtsy, splitting the back of his costume.

"But they slammed him," insisted the fussy old gentleman.

"No, they panned him," some one corrected him.

"What deplorable slang!" he replied quite testily.

Mr. St. John came before the curtain once more.

"Our next word is in three syllables," he announced, "and it, too, is a flower."

The curtain rose and showed the boys dressed in gunny sacks with ribbons tied around their hair like Greek youths of ancient days.

Todd, dressed like a girl, in flowing white robes that looked strangely like a nightgown, stood holding a gilded apple in his hand.

The youths got ready to run and, at the word from Mr. Hunter, they raced forward. Peter got there first and seized the golden apple.

"Fruit," said the fussy old gentleman.

"Race," said somebody else.

The second act was a cave made out of crêpe paper, white spotted with ink to represent stone. This was carefully explained by Mr. St. John. David crawled out of it on all fours, making a noise that he fondly hoped was like a roaring lion.

"Cave."

"Lion."

"Lair," shouted the audience.

The next act was a schoolroom with Mr. Hunter as the teacher. He asked questions which none of the boys could answer, so he caned them all with a rod that he held in his hand.

Nobody guessed it and they all waited eagerly for the whole word.

In came Peter dressed in yellow and green, sneezing and coughing, and apparently in the last stages of hay fever.

"Goldenrod, of course," they called, and the fussy old gentleman had to have it all explained to him how the first was a goal to which they raced, and the second a den, and the third a rod. He accepted it, grumbling.

The acts went on and each one was funnier than the one before, the costumes were absurd and the actors seemed to enjoy it more than the audience.

At the end Peter came out to make a speech and thanked Mrs. St. John and Mrs. Southie and Miss Wicks for the great help that they had given them.

“And to think that nice young man is that dreadful twin’s husband. I can’t believe it,” exclaimed Mrs. Southie.

Janet overheard her and went off chuckling to herself.

“As long as one of the firm is all right, I guess we can stand my being that dreadful twin. Anyhow, David and Mabs are worth it,” she said.

CHAPTER XIII

TIM

THE twins had been home three days. They had returned to an empty village, for the Westlakes were all in camp and Old Chester was nothing with them away.

"Glory, I miss Alice and Lorry and Deb. Don't you?" inquired Janet.

They were sitting on the terrace, and Phyllis was shelling peas to help Kate who was busy with the cleaning.

"And Dodo and Di and Deedee and Little Thing," laughed Phyllis; "yes, I miss them all but we'll be with them soon, that's one consolation."

"What shall we do this afternoon?" questioned Janet. "I feel like going out in the car. Shall we take Auntie Mogs and Nan for a ride?"

"Yes, let's," replied Phyllis. "Help me with these peas and I'll soon be ready."

They finished the shelling and Phyllis went to get the car. They drove through the village and drew up at the little old-fashioned house with its widow's walk atop.

"Remember the day I fell asleep on the widow's walk and Peter came and got me down," said Janet.

"And we had pancakes for breakfast and lunch. I should say I did," returned Phyllis, "I can't eat them to this day."

"No?" asked Janet in mock surprise.

"Well, you know what I mean," said Phyllis, "not in quantities the way I used to."

"No?" asked Janet, who was thinking of the last Sunday morning and the number that Phyllis had devoured.

Phyllis brought the car to a standstill and said sharply: "Get out of this car this minute, you unsympathetic creature, and I don't eat nearly as many as you do anyway."

"No?" said Janet once more as she jumped out of the car.

In the walled-in garden they saw Sonya and Hester playing house. They dropped everything at sight of them and flew with outstretched

hands. Sonya ran to Phyllis and Hester to Janet.

After the greetings were over, Sonya pointed dramatically to the house.

"Don't go in there; Auntie Mogs and Nan are having a terrible time with Mrs. Blake. She wants to tell something, and Auntie Mogs says she mustn't, and I think they are all crying."

Janet and Phyllis looked at each other and Janet said: "That's no place for us."

Even then they did not guess the truth.

"How would you two babes like to go for an automobile ride? Pack up your family and bring them along," Janet suggested. "Hester, you run in and tell Auntie Mogs we are taking you with us."

Hester was off in a jiffy and Sonya set about getting the dolls ready for their treat.

"They are still crying," said Hester disgustedly, when she came back. "That is, Mrs. Blake is, and Nan is talking to her about her backbone."

"Wonder what's up?" asked Phyllis.

"Don't know," said Janet, "must be something pretty terrible to make Mrs. Blake cry."

They piled into the car, the two youngsters on the back seat with their dolls.

"I have an idea," said Janet as they drove through the village street. "Let's go and visit Timothy O'Hara, Jr. this afternoon; he'll love seeing the kids."

"Oh, good idea!" exclaimed Phyllis. "That's a really fine way to spend the afternoon. But children," she cautioned, "you must pretend not to notice Tim's leg and you mustn't ask him to play any rough games with you."

"Oh, we won't," promised Sonya, "we'll be ever so gentle," and she proceeded to tell her dolls just how to behave.

Tim's house was the last of a row in the tiny village street of Rodney. It was more like a cabin than a house, for it was only one story high. A little patch of garden lay in front and a picket fence with a latched gate hemmed in the trim little plot.

Phyllis walked up the narrow garden path to the front door. There didn't seem to be a bell, so she knocked gently.

"Come in," called a cheery voice, and she opened the door and walked into a neat little

room with white muslin curtains at the window and an oilcloth on the floor. Most of the hit-and-miss furniture was pushed against the wall, and the floor space was taken up with the tracks of Tim's railroad. He himself sat on a pillow in the middle of it.

Somehow or other he got to his feet and dragged himself over to Phyllis and threw his arms around her. When he had kissed her soundly, he asked:

"Is the other one of you outside?"

Phyllis nodded and went to the door. There was an unaccountable lump in her throat and she could hardly find voice to call the others.

Janet came in for her share of Tim's hearty greeting and then they introduced Sonya and Hester.

"How do you do, little boy?" (Tim was at least a year the elder of the two.) "We've come to play with you."

"That's awfully nice of you," replied Tim, "but you mustn't call me a little boy. I'm quite big; you see, it's this thing," pointing to his brace, "that makes me look small."

"What shall we play?" asked the practical Hester.

"Let's play trains!"

"Let's play house!" said Tim and Sonya together.

"Let's play both!" said Hester, the peace-maker. "Our dolls can ride on your trains."

So the game began and went on with the usual squabbles. Janet and Phyllis went over and sat down by the window.

"Darling, who takes care of you all day?" asked Phyllis, at last breaking in on the train wreck and the arrival of the Red Cross.

"I stay by myself!" Tim answered with a grin, "except when teacher comes to give me lessons in the afternoon three times a week and of course Dad's here in the evening, mostly, but I'm not afraid even when he's not here, 'cause Dad says nothing could hurt a little lame boy, a big lame boy, I mean."

"That's right, of course," said Phyllis, and again came that lump in her throat.

"Is there an ice cream store up in the village where we could get some ice cream?" asked Janet, changing the subject tactfully.

"Yes, ma'am, there's the drug store. Mr. Dodgers has swell ice cream, but would you mind waiting just a few little minutes, 'cause Dad will be home then, and he loves ice cream?"

"Suppose I go and get it now, and we'll keep it on the ice till your father gets here," suggested Janet.

"Oh, that will be grand," said Tim. "We'll have a party and all sit down to the table. No, I forgot, there aren't chairs enough."

"Oh, it will be lots more fun to sit on the floor," said Sonya.

Janet left them and went down the village street. Wherever she mentioned Tim's name, she found ready praise, in the drug store and in the baker's, and the baker's wife said confidentially to her:

"But Timothy O'Hara keeps himself to himself, and don't encourage us to have much to do with the boy, though we run in often."

"I see," said Janet, and she guessed that Trooper O'Hara was fiercely proud.

She got back to the cottage just as he rode up on his horse, and he greeted her with a deep bow.

"You keep your promises, I see, ma'am," he said, "and is your other half inside?" he asked respectfully.

They went in together and it was a rare thing to see the man and the boy meet and shake hands. Nothing so babyish as a kiss.

Trooper O'Hara took the two little girls out and gave them a ride on his horse and Tim watched them through the front window, a patient little smile on his face, while Janet and Phyllis found china and spoons and set out the feast.

"Trooper O'Hara, I think you are the grandest man that ever lived," exclaimed Sonya as they re-entered the room. "I wish I had you for a father," went on that terrible child. "Ivan is all right for a brother, but he's not a bit exciting. He doesn't ride a horse or wear a uniform or anything like that."

"Think of that, now," said O'Hara, terribly embarrassed.

They had the ice cream and cake then, and Tim seemed to enjoy it hugely.

"Will you come again?" asked O'Hara, when they were getting into the car.

"We will," promised Phyllis and Janet together.

"Oh, dear," sighed Sonya, "I'd be a cripple like Tim to have a father like that."

"Oh, darling, *don't* say that," said Phyllis and turning to Janet she added, "Oh, Jan, isn't there something we can do?"

"Don't bother me," said Janet, "I'm thinking furiously and I have an inkling."

CHAPTER XIV

THE TRAIN WRECK

THE twins talked it over that night with Peter and English, but could come to no conclusion.

"Trooper O'Hara is so dreadfully proud," sighed Phyllis, "there's only one thing to do, and that's to find him a wife, and I don't believe there's a woman living he would consider worthy of being Tim's stepmother."

"Well, I agree with him there. What a wonder Tim is!" replied Janet. "Anyway, we'll have to leave it until we get back from camp, but I hate to think of that little fellow alone every day."

They were to start for camp on Monday and today was Friday. There was lots to be done in the meantime and, although they kept Tim in the back of their minds, there wasn't much time to think seriously about him.

Auntie Mogs and Nan were coming over to keep house for the two boys, and when the time came for them to take a vacation, Helen and Ivan were going to close up their house and come to the Enchanted Kingdom to look after things. Later they were to bring Hester and Sonya up for their wedding.

It was hard to get a wardrobe together for camp, they seemed to need so many kinds of clothes. Sport suits for roughing it, cool dresses for hot days, and evening frocks for parties, and, of course, bathing things. Everything had to go into suitcases, for there was no room for trunks at Happy-Go-Lucky Lodge.

Phyllis and Janet wanted to drive up in the car, but the boys were against this. There were to be no more long drives without them—there was no telling what trouble the girls might get into.

"I don't suppose you'll get there without an adventure," sighed English, "but I hope you don't get lost in the wilds of the Adirondacks.

"You get there so late at night. I do hope Alice gets to the station in time to meet you, as I remember that's a pretty lonely place."

"You forget Paws, who lives just over the way. He's a great friend of Judy's and would, I am sure, protect us against bears and other wild animals," Janet reminded them.

"Oh, Alice is sure to meet us," Phyllis assured them.

"Well, I hope so," grumbled Peter.

Monday morning was drowsy and sultry. Everything was warm and muggy, and the girls thought with horror of the coming long trip on the train.

"Darling, let me wire Alice that you won't be there until tomorrow," begged English.

"Never," answered Phyllis. "We may be butter balls by the time we arrive, but arrive we will. Eh, Janet?"

"Absolutely," agreed Janet. She spoke very determinedly.

So they started for the station and the early morning train that was to carry them to the junction, where they changed cars for the little way station, the nearest point to Happy-Go-Lucky Lodge.

The train was hot and the seats of plush, suffocating. The first thing Phyllis did was to buy

a palm leaf fan from the porter and fan herself vigorously with it.

"Making yourself just that much hotter," as Janet remarked.

It was too hot to do anything but sleep, so they drowsed through the first part of the morning.

"Is there a diner on the train?" demanded Janet about noon.

"No, missy, there ain't no diner on this yere car," answered the porter. "There ain't no diner till the junction, and that's where you all is leaving us."

"Then where do we eat our luncheon?" demanded Phyllis in turn.

"You all has to come to me for that," replied the porter, "jus' tell me what you want, and I'll get it for you at the next lunch counter."

"I'll take squab on toast, fresh green peas, and oh, yes, a bottle of champagne," said Phyllis perfectly seriously.

The porter's eyes opened wide in amazement.

"What you want is a chicken sandwich and a bottle of ginger pop, I reckon," he said, and his face broke into a brilliant grin.

The chicken was very tough and the rolls hard,

but the twins managed to eat them and drink the ginger ale which made them much hotter.

The long hours of the afternoon dragged along and they squirmed around in their seats exactly like peevish children. They would have fought if they could have thought of anything worth fighting about.

Everybody in the car was fussy except the porter, who walked up and down the aisle, fixing a window, or adjusting a shade, and making everybody thoroughly ashamed of his ill humor.

"Missy, would you like to play kyards?" he asked, as he stopped at Phyllis' side.

"Oh, yes," exclaimed Phyllis, "anything to forget this terrible heat."

"I don't suppose you have such a thing as a cribbage board, have you?" asked Janet.

"That's just what I have got," he exclaimed, and went off in search of a table, a cribbage counter, and a greasy pack of cards.

After that it was fun to watch the rest of the car. One by one they became interested in the game and came and stood behind the twins and gave advice, and when Janet finally won by two points they set up a cheer.

They played game after game and finally stopped to watch the sun set, a blazing ball. Then they gave up their places to two traveling salesmen and watched them until it was time to collect their bags and get out at the junction.

The next car was hotter than the first, and before they had ridden many miles a sharp crack of thunder warned them of an approaching storm. When it came, it was terrible, the lightning and the thunder ripped and crashed at the same time, and it looked as though the sky were going to open and swallow the earth.

Phyllis was terrified, but Janet rather enjoyed it. All of a sudden, after a particularly loud crash, there was a grinding of brakes, and the train stopped so suddenly that it threw the passengers out of their seats.

There were only a half dozen people in the twins' car and they were all more or less dazed for a minute. One of the women fainted and almost everyone screamed.

The twins had been taught never to show any signs of fear in an accident for, as Auntie Mogs told them, that was the time to keep your head, so Phyllis said quite calmly:

"Wonder what's up?"

"More adventure," returned Janet. "I'm going forward to see."

But there was no need for her to stir from her seat for, at that moment, the porter came in dripping water from his coat sleeves and his hat, and told them that there was a tree down on the track and there was no telling when they would get away.

"It's a mighty big tree," he said, "and we-all need a wreckin' crew to budge it."

"Is anybody hurt?" asked Phyllis, who was at her best in an emergency.

"The engineer ain't so good," replied the porter. "They is looking for a doctor on the train."

"I am a doctor," said a quiet little man in the corner seat, "perhaps I may be of assistance if these young ladies will help me. They seem to be quite calm. Perhaps you know something about bandaging?" he went on, "my arm is quite out of commission."

"I can do exactly what I am told to do," said Janet quietly. "Shall we start?"

"I'll carry your case, sir," said the porter, taking down a black Boston bag from the rack.

They found the engineer in the first car surrounded by a group of excited people.

"Make way for the doctor, please," said the porter, importantly, and the crowd scrambled back to their seats.

Phyllis and Janet did the bandaging under the doctor's orders. The poor engineer was badly cut and bruised, but he smiled gamely and helped the twins all he could.

When it was over, the conductor, a fat, imposing person, came forward to thank the girls for their services and took their names and addresses and hinted at a reward, at which the twins laughed.

While they listened to him, they had been conscious of an automobile horn honking away at a great rate. Suddenly it stopped and a few minutes later scared faces of Alice and Judy appeared in the doorway.

"Twins!" they exclaimed.

"Alice!"

"Judy!" exclaimed the twins in chorus.

And everybody in the car smiled as though it were a matter of personal relief that the twins had found their friends and were all right.

CHAPTER XV

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LODGE

HAPPY-GO-LUCKY LODGE was composed of a group of buildings; the center was a large, comfy room hung in chintz, with apple-green wicker furniture. Deerskins covered the floor and mounted deer heads and fish hung on the wall. It was a delightful room and tonight there was only one lamp lit, so the room was in shadows. No fire greeted them, for it was too hot. Clustered around the main room were the cottages, log cabins with bunks, and each had its own fireplace.

"Do stop talking about us," begged Phyllis as they neared the entrance gates. "Do tell us the news up here."

"There isn't any," protested Judy. "Lorry and Jimmy go around with their heads in the clouds, and Debby and Archie Lang are almost as bad; the Mettams arrive tomorrow and so do

Sally and Taffy and Nat with their respective beaus."

"Oh, my Aunt Jane's poll parrot, and you say there isn't any news. What do you call all that?" asked Janet.

"Well, it's not like being in a train wreck and binding up the engineer's arm and head for him," Alice insisted.

"Here we are," Judy brought the car around with a swing to the front steps and the Westlakes swarmed over it. There were great bear hugs from Dodo and Di, and a delighted kiss from Debby, and a hearty handshake from the Spartan Lorry. Dee and Little Thing were in bed and their greetings would have to come in the morning.

They had to tell about the wreck all over again, and then Alice told how she and Judy had gone to the station, found there had been a wreck and had gone to it, hoping against hope that the twins were safe, and had discovered them as usual the center of everything.

"Now how are the dogs?" asked Janet, and Judy took her by the arm and led her to the barn where some half-grown puppies were asleep in

a soft nest, and Juno rose majestically to make a very undignified fuss over Janet.

They all went to bed early and before morning they were glad of the extra blankets at the foot of their beds.

The twins slept straight through until nine o'clock, and were awakened then only by the arrival of Dodo and Di with trays on which were substantial breakfasts.

"Angel," murmured Phyllis sleepily as she sat up and yawned.

"Thanks a lot," sighed Janet, "but couldn't you come back an hour later?" and she buried her head in the pillow until Dodo shook her.

"Oh, very well," she said, "if you don't want to meet the New York train——"

That was enough for Janet, she was sitting up and rubbing her eyes in a minute.

A half hour later they were all down on the shore of the lake trying to decide who should go to meet the incoming train.

"The twins, of course," decided Alice. "Sally and her Cousin Natalie, not to mention Daphne, would get on the train and go right back home if they were not there to greet them. I think,

Debby, you and Archie and Judy had better go and meet the Mettams, and I guess Jane had better go, too." Jane was Archie Lang's younger sister and a great pal of Judy's.

"No, thanks," she said decidedly. "It's bad enough coming on those two by mistake, but willingly to spend time with them, to have to sit in a car with them, I think not. How about you, Judy?"

"Oh, let the darlings go by themselves," answered Judy good-naturedly. "Jane and I will go over to the house and meet them there."

The Mettams' house was across the lake from Happy-Go-Lucky Lodge.

"No, they are all coming here for a pick-up luncheon," said Alice, "so you girls can meet them at the lodge gates as long as you refuse to accompany my daughter," she added, pretending to be haughty and laughing in the middle of it.

"Oh, Alice," exclaimed Jane, "it's not your daughter; it's my brother. Of course, she's done it to him, made him rude to everybody else, I mean, but most of the trouble is the way he looks at her. I just simply can't stand it."

"Simpleton," said Archie, grandly, "you're

only jealous because you couldn't possibly get anybody to look that way at you," and he took Debby's arm and led her to the waiting car, a Ford station wagon.

"Jealous of you?" said Judy coming to Jane's defense, "don't be silly, my dear boy, don't be silly."

"Judy," said Archie witheringly, "I thought *you* had more sense."

"Well," said Debby good-naturedly, "now that the squall is over, let's get started."

"Deb, how can you like those two girls?" demanded Archie.

"Dear Archie," replied Debby calmly, "I think sometimes you are a little lacking in a sense of humor. The girls were only teasing and you took it so seriously."

"I don't like people to tease you, Deb," replied Archie.

"And I adore to have them," sighed Debby.

Plodding on behind them in the wagon hitched to the two farm horses, sat Handson driving. Beside him was Janet.

"Waal, now, miss," said Handson suddenly, "you ought to be doing the driving," and he

handed the reins to her and settled back to light his pipe.

They had a long wait at the station, for the New York train was late, but Paws came out of his house and talked to Handson, and their conversation was the best form of amusement.

At last the train whistled, and before it had really stopped, Chuck and Quentin were out on the platform waiting to help Daphne and Sally out. They were followed by the Mettams and last of all by Nat and Jim Andrews.

The Mettam boys, Tony and Charlie, asked at once where Dodo and Di and Jane and Judy were. They were quite grown up this year and were wearing long trousers.

"You are all coming with us to the Lodge for luncheon," insisted Janet. She was speaking to Mrs. Mettam who protested.

"But, my dear girl, take the boys by all means, but let us old folks go along and open up the cabin. The servants can't come up until tomorrow, so there's lots to be done."

"No, there isn't," denied Phyllis laughing, "Alice says to tell you that the sheets were all aired before the beds were made, and Mr. Lang

is keeping the fires all going to dry things out."

"What neighbors!" exclaimed Mrs. Mettam turning to her husband. "There's no need to worry now about going into a damp house."

"That's just the sort of thing Mrs. Westlake would think of doing. By the way, is Mr. Westlake up here this summer?"

"Not yet," Janet told him, "he is coming up later with Peter and English, next week, you know, for Lorry's wedding."

"God bless my soul, a wedding on the lake. How splendid!" said Mrs. Mettam.

They all climbed aboard, and Janet flourishing the whip led the way down the long, dusty road. The Ford followed until Archie thought the dust was making Debby sneeze and he drove in front and drew up at the gates long before the sleepy old team.

The pick-up luncheon was lots of fun. Quentin was the only real newcomer, and everybody liked him at first sight and went on liking him better as the day drew to a close and his jolly way of saying, "It's a bit of all right," showed he was contented with them all.

Just before the sun set they all went bathing.

The Mettams had their motor boat out first thing and spent the whole afternoon, with the aid of Dodo and Di and Jane and Judy, in tuning it up. Counting Judy's new surf board, they had six and they took turns riding at the back of the motor boat and seeing how many tricks they could do that the other fellow couldn't.

Judy was crazy about Quentin and begged him to take her on the surf board with him and, to the surprise and envy of everybody, she climbed up on his shoulders and they rode half-way around the lake.

That evening after dinner they wandered down to the lake and began to go off in twos. Somehow Judy slipped away and found herself alone in the big living room with faithful Juno beside her.

"Juno, dear old lady," began Judy, "I'm afraid I'm growing old. I don't seem to fit in with the Mettam boys this year for, in spite of their long trousers, they are still just kids. Guess I've seen too much of Jimmy and the way he treats Lorry, and my adorable Quentin and the nice Chuck. I want somebody grown up to play with and there doesn't seem to be a soul."

Just then the telephone rang and Judy rose listlessly to answer it.

"A telegram for you, miss, or it's really for Mrs. Westlake," came the station master's voice.

"I'll take it," said Judy.

"Here goes then:

HARRY WATERS ARRIVED HOME FROM BOSTON
TODAY STOP SHALL WE BRING HIM WITH US TO
THE WEDDING STOP LOVE TO ALL STOP

PETER AND ENGLISH

As Judy turned away from the telephone, she saw Alice's shadow pass the door and called to her.

"Here's a telegram for you, Alice," she said and repeated it.

"I don't see where we can put another living mortal," Alice said. Then she saw the look of disappointment on Judy's face and added quickly, "but, of course, he must come," and taking Judy by the arm, she led her out to the men's bunk houses to see if they could find an extra corner in which to slip the rotund Harry.

CHAPTER XVI

THE PARTY

THE days were packed full of amusement and the time flew. The date set for the wedding had almost arrived and great were the preparations. The Mettams had already entertained for Lorry and Jimmy and when this chapter opens the Langs were giving a fancy dress ball.

It was to be unique in this respect: everybody was to come representing a character. Later they were to pose on the stage and the rest were to guess whom they represented. The one who made the best picture was to receive a prize.

"I say, can we do it in groups?" asked Quentin, when Mrs. Lang was telling them about it.

"Oh, yes, as many as you like, so long as you represent a well-known picture," she told him.

From that minute on Quentin and English had their heads together, and no one could pry their

secret out of them, except Sally and Phyllis, who had to be consulted about costumes.

English and Peter, with Mr. Westlake and Harry Waters, had arrived the day before. The girls found Harry greatly changed for the better, he was not so fat and he seemed to have gained in assurance. "He is still," thought Janet, "a long way from being like Peter."

At first, he stuck to the twins and Daphne and Sally, but as the day progressed he began to notice Nat and Judy. Jim Andrews was always at Nat's side; and Harry fell into position beside Judy, much to her satisfaction.

"Let's all go for a walk and decide what picture we can do for the party tomorrow night," suggested Nat. "You boys may want us to make your costumes for you."

"Let's do a nursery rhyme," suggested Jim. "Harry, you'd make a first-class Little Boy Blue and I could be Little Jack Horner and eat a pie."

"Thanks, if there are any pies to be eaten, I'll eat them," Harry laughed. "Everybody always teases me about eating too much anyway, so I ought to be Jack Horner."

"All right, I give in, I'll be Little Boy Blue, toot, toot," and Jim did a light and airy dance which was applauded by his audience.

"Only Little Boy Blue didn't do a dance," said Judy. "I hate to throw cold water on your performance, old dear, but he went to sleep in the haystack while the sheep and the cows played hooky."

"I think I ought to dance," said Jim stubbornly, "I do it so well."

"I have a better idea," said Nat slowly, "something grotesque."

"Here," interrupted Jim, "none of your seventy-five-cent words here. What do you mean, grotesque?"

"Something ridiculous, absurd, ugly, only I don't mean ugly exactly." Nat floundered and was lost.

"Well, tell us what you do mean, Nat, and don't pay any attention to Jim's rude interruptions," said Judy.

"I thought we might do 'Mary, Mary, quite contrary, how does your garden grow?' and let Jim be Mistress Mary and the rest of us be sweet little maids all in a row."

"Oh, priceless," Jim agreed, "I'll love being Mistress Mary."

"And I want a blue sash tied around my middle," begged Harry.

"Where shall we get the silver bells and cockleshells?" asked Judy. "I think the Mettams have a collection of shells we might borrow."

"And a bunch of bluebells from the garden will serve," decided Nat.

Somehow the word got round to Mrs. Lang that some of her guests were coming as Mother Goose characters and she was so delighted at the idea that she changed the party into a Mother Goose affair. This simplified matters for most of the guests, all, that is, except Daphne, who was going to pose as no less a person than Mrs. Siddons by Sir Joshua Reynolds. She liked to rub it in that she herself would have made a famous actress had not Chuck insisted upon marrying her.

There was a grand scramble to get the costumes finished and the girls sewed furiously all afternoon.

They had a pick-up supper on the lawn and then hurried to their cabins to dress for the party.

The Mettams' motor boat was to take them across the lake and it had to make several trips to do it.

Buddy Locke was up at his end of the lake with his father and, of course, he spent most of his time with Dodo and Di and Jane and the Mettams. His one sorrow was that he had no pair of long trousers, but Dodo told him she liked him just as well without them which was a comfort. They had been busy all day making something out of a wooden frame and yards of brown bunting.

The party was held on the lawn and the stage was the piazza where they had rigged up the same curtain that had done duty the year before for the Mikado.

Because of their stage setting being so elaborate the younger people showed their tableau first. When the curtain went up you saw an oddly shaped box covered with brown bunting and on it was a huge sign which read:

THIS IS A SHOE

The door in the side opened and out came Dodo dressed like a witch but for all the world

like the old lady that lived in the shoe. Out came all her children and to give the illusion of great numbers they disappeared to return by the door many times, an endless procession.

Everybody chanted, "There was an old lady who lived in a shoe."

"Shucks, they guessed it," said Buddy and looked pained because everybody laughed.

Sally and Phyllis came next. Sally looked very handsome dressed as a boy, and Phyllis very demure as a Mother Goose girl, with a long white dress and a big pink sash.

They solemnly sat at a table and Sally cut a big piece of ham and kept the lean part for herself and gave the fat to Phyllis.

"Jack Sprat and his wife," called everybody at the same time.

Judy and Harry with Nat and Jim Andrews came next and everybody roared with delight when they saw them. Jim was wearing a white nightgown belonging to Mrs. Handson and it was tied in the middle with a big blue bow. On his head he wore a baby's bonnet tied under his chin, and he carried a watering can. First he pretended to water the bluebells but no water

came out, and next the cockleshells, then he turned his attention to the little maids all in a row, who were all dressed in white with pink and red sashes. He tipped up the can and poured the water on their heads.

"Jim Andrews, is that nice?" demanded Nat, shaking the water from her hair.

Retribution followed swiftly. Harry took the can away from Jim, who was laughing so hard he couldn't hang on to it, and poured all the contents over Jim's head.

The audience showed its delight by vigorous handclapping, and Buddie was heard to remark:

"There goes our chance for the prize."

Peter and Janet came next. Peter as Little Boy Blue and Janet as Mary who had a little lamb. She dragged a toy lamb across the stage behind her and woke up Little Boy Blue who was fast asleep and he cried quite realistically indeed.

Debby and Archie and Lorry and Jimmy followed. They joined hands and played, "Thus the farmer sews his seed, thus he stands and takes his ease, awaiting for a partner," and when it came to "and kiss her when you get her

in," Jimmy kissed the embarrassed Lorry on the cheek, while Archie looked at Debby and finally compromised by kissing her hand.

They received their quota of applause and then Chuck did a really funny bit of acting as Simple Simon.

"I'm going to vote for Chuck," said Janet, audibly, as the curtain came together.

Chuck poked his head out from between its folds and called, "Thank you, Jan."

Daphne made a beautiful Little Miss Muffet; she was the only one whose costume wasn't ridiculous. She had on a dainty white dress and a mob cap and she sat on her stool daintily sipping her curds and whey. Down came the spider, a huge beast with wire legs, worked by Chuck on a pulley from the wings.

Then they dropped from the sublime to the ridiculous again. Quentin and English appeared as Jack and Jill. Jack was dressed in patched blue overalls and a torn straw hat. English took the part and he looked very well, but it was Quentin who excelled in costume. He had on a wig made of shavings, the curly kind, and he wore a short dress. Nobody knew where he

found it, except Mrs. Handson, and she wouldn't tell. The dress didn't meet in the back so he had to keep a front view to the audience. Under the dress were long pantalettes.

Jack fell down hard and Jill certainly came tumbling after. Then they got their feet mixed up together and had a terrible time untangling them and Quentin caught his arm in English's suspenders and couldn't get it out.

They had the entire audience in hysterics, and when they finally stood up to take their encores and Quentin stuck his finger in his mouth and cried, the house came down.

Daphne received the prize for being the prettiest and English and Quentin shared the one for the drollest. It was a big cake and, with their friends crowding around them, they made short work of it.

"Jan, do you know that is the first time we have been separated in a thing like this. I don't like it," said Phyllis in the motor boat on the way home after they had danced all evening.

Jan gave her hand a little squeeze, "I know it, darling, that's why the twins didn't get a prize," she said, laughingly.

CHAPTER XVII

LORRY, A BRIDE

THE next morning a telegram came from Old Chester for Janet. Alice brought it to her, for she had been up and answered the telephone when they called up from the village.

"Bad news, girls," she said, as she entered their cabin, "but not dreadful," she added as she saw the worried look that spread over the two faces.

"Tell us," said Phyllis.

"Sonya and Hester are both down with the measles, so Ivan and Helen won't be able to come up today for the wedding and, of course, Nan and Auntie Mogs won't come either. I don't see how Lorry is to be married without them."

"Oh, poor babies," sighed Janet, "and they were looking forward so to coming. I know they'll be broken-hearted."

"So will the rest," exclaimed Phyllis. "Why, Auntie Mogs has done nothing but talk of how

eager she was to see Lorry in a veil, and Nan got all excited over the kitchen cabinet she was going to buy them for a wedding present."

"I know, isn't it characteristic of the two?" said Alice. "Nan with her kitchen cabinet and Auntie Mogs with her painting by Turner. What joy they will get out of both gifts!"

"I haven't broken the news to Deedee and Little Thing," Alice went on, "they will be heart-broken. It's a wonder Di and Dodo didn't get it."

"But the children couldn't possibly have taken it from school, they've been away too long. Good gracious, Phyl, do you believe they gave it to Timothy Junior?" exclaimed Janet.

"Oh, that's too awful to think about," replied Phyllis, "come on; let's get up and go down and take a swim. We need all our strength for today."

"Be sure the bride doesn't see the bridegroom," Janet insisted. "It's terribly bad luck if they meet."

Archie Lang was evidently of the same mind, for when the twins in bathing suits and bright scarlet caps went down to the shore for a dip in

the icy water of the lake, they found Archie and the Mettam boys dragging Jimmy to the motor boat, the small one that belonged to Happy-Go-Lucky Lodge.

"I tell you I want to see her," Jimmy was saying when the twins joined them.

"You're not if I see you first," said Archie. "Deb said you mustn't and them's my orders."

"It's bad luck, honest it is," said Charlie Mettam. "We know a girl who saw her husband before she got to the church and now they fight like anything."

"There you are, Jimmy, there's proof positive," laughed Janet.

"Well, I don't see what difference that will make. Lorry and I shall probably scrap anyway. Think how dull it would be if we didn't; besides, I have something to tell her. Let me go, you fellows."

"Never!" Archie Lang answered, "you come over to our house with all your duds and we'll bring you back in time for the wedding."

"Better go, Jimmy, it's foolish to dare the fates," teased Janet.

"What, you too? Then I *am* sunk," groaned

Jimmy, and permitted himself to be led away by the triumphant Archie.

Sally and Daphne came out together and joined the twins.

"Oh, Phyl," sighed Daphne, "do you suppose we shall have weather like this for our wedding?"

"Sure to," Phyllis replied.

"Lucky is the bride that the sun shines on," quoted Sally.

"What a lot of funny superstitions there are about marriage, and we couldn't think of not carrying them out," remarked Janet.

Asked Sally, "Has the bride something old, something new, something borrowed and something blue?"

"Oh, yes, we must see to that," replied Phyllis.

"Well, I'm for a swim; coming anybody?" and Janet ran and jumped into the ice cold water and came up sputtering.

Phyllis followed and Sally after her but Daphne put one foot in and took it out again hastily.

"Oh, come on, Taffy, show some spirit," teased Sally, but Taffy only shook her head.

By this time the boys had joined them and

Chuck, without a word, picked Daphne up in his arms and carried her out to where the lake deepened and then dropped her unceremoniously into the cold water. Daphne came up sputtering.

"Chuck, I'll never speak to you again as long as I live," she said angrily, "you may have your ring back as soon as I get out of this and I never want to see you again."

Something possessed Chuck this morning for, without another word, he tipped Daphne up and plunged her for the second time into the water.

"Why, Chuck, how dare you?" stormed Daphne.

Chuck picked her up again, kicking and screaming, and asked:

"Do you want me to do it again?"

"Oh, Chuck, don't please, don't," cried Daphne.

"Very well, say after me, 'I, Daphne Hillis, promise never to break my engagement again, and if I do I give Chuck my permission to duck me in whatever water is handy,'" Chuck said solemnly.

"Oh, I won't say it," exclaimed Daphne, "you wait till I get out of this."

Without waiting for a minute, Chuck dropped her in the water again and she come up this time in tears.

"Oh, pax, pax," she cried, "I'll say anything, but don't do that to me again."

Suddenly Chuck was all contrition.

"Darling, I'm so sorry, do forgive me and stop crying," he begged.

"Spoiled a good beginning with a poor ending," criticized Quentin. "Now if he'd just kept that up——"

It was Sally's turn to be ruffled, but instead of saying anything, she caught her fiancé off his guard and sent him head over heels in the water. He came up sputtering and laughing and challenged Sally to a race to the raft.

Alice came to the bank and called then all in.

"My word," she said, "you'd never think there was going to be a wedding in this house at noon today. Where are the others?"

They hurried out of the water and when they were dressed they all went to Lorry's cabin. She was having her breakfast in bed, Alice had insisted upon it and Lorry thought it foolishness. Alice was bossing everybody around and she fi-

nally sent the twins off in the station car to meet the train from New York, for Grant Weeks and Nick DeFoe and David Malone were expected.

When they returned the younger members of the party were back from their flower hunt and the place was literally filled with daisies and black-eyed susans.

They had made a daisy chain to reach the length of the room, making a pathway for the bride to walk up to the curtain of leaves before which the minister was expected to stand.

The garden flowers made up two pretty baskets for Deedee and Little Thing to carry. The room fairly shimmered in flowers.

Of course, David Malone wanted to see Jimmy right away and Janet took him across the lake in a canoe. It was his first ride in one and he looked very uncomfortable.

Nick DeFoe stayed to talk to Phyllis and called her Janet all the time, while Grant Weeks threw himself into the spirit of the day and helped at everything.

The twins and Alice helped Lorry dress. She wore an old brooch of her mother's, a new pinkie ring of emeralds that Alice had given her and

she carried a chiffon handkerchief that was borrowed from Phyllis and her garters were light blue.

"There," said Alice, when she had put the last finishing touches to her veil, "you ought to be a lucky bride."

"Jimmy makes me that," said Lorry shyly, "but, oh, Alice, I do hate all this fuss."

"You won't when you see what a good time everybody else is having," Alice cheered her.

"Great Scott," exclaimed Phyllis, "there goes the music."

"Is Jimmy here?" Lorry whispered.

Mrs. Mettam was playing the piano and awaiting the signal to start the wedding march. Jimmy and David Malone waited at the side door, while Lorry and Debby and Deedee and Little Thing stood at the main entrance. Everything was ready but where was Mr. Westlake?

Alice was frantically looking for him all over the place; the twins, scenting trouble, left their places and joined in the hunt. After a minute Peter and English joined them.

Jimmy, who did not understand the delay, thought Lorry had changed her mind.

At last Janet had an inspiration. She dashed off to the boathouse and there, sitting in a deck chair regardless of everything else but the book he was reading, sat Mr. Westlake.

The wedding ended after the simple ceremony and then the gift that Alice had been keeping secret was revealed!

A bright red roadster instead of the Ford in which they had thought to take their honeymoon stood at the door all bedecked in white ribbons and old shoes.

Jimmy almost forgot his bride at sight of it, and Lorry threw her arms around Alice in an un-Spartan-like way.

After the luncheon, which was served on the lawn, Lorry hurried into her sport clothes, but it was in her wedding gown that everybody would remember her. Almost like a statue except for the radiance of her hair and the color in her eyes. The simple white chiffon dress and the long white veil made her look like a fairy, or a person from some other more beautiful planet. Surely the sight of her was something none of them would ever forget.

"She's almost as beautiful as Helen of Troy,"

said David Malone. "And why didn't she come to the wedding?"

The subject was changed, but for the rest of the day they went around as though they were walking on air.

Lorry and Jimmy were busy discussing their new kitchen cabinet, but it was a good thing that none of the rest of them could hear them.

CHAPTER XVIII

CHARLIE SMOKES

THERE was a dreadful lull after the wedding guests had departed and only the twins were left with the Westlakes. Debby missed Lorry so much that Archie was hard put to comfort her, and Little Thing went around asking:

“Why doesn’t my Lorry come and tuck me in bed?”

“My Aunt Jane’s poll parrot,” complained Alice, “you’d think Lorry was dead instead of married. I can’t tell you how I miss the child and it’s growing on me. I miss her today more than yesterday and I know it will be worse tomorrow.”

“I know,” sympathized Phyllis, “I can’t get used to not seeing her around and I miss the boys, too, and while we’re on the subject let’s have a little gossip. Have you noticed Judy and the mail bag? She’s really worth watching.

Today she has gone for the mail alone and I know what for."

"I don't," said Janet, "that child can't be expecting a letter from anybody."

"Oh, can't she?" laughed Phyllis, "well, tomorrow we'll go and get the mail and see what she does when we give it out. I tell you it's a case."

"What *are* you talking about?" demanded Alice.

They were sitting in the shade of one of the big trees near the lake and were all busy sewing.

Out across the water was the Mettams' boat and the girls were fishing.

"We'll never catch anything. I don't believe there's a fish in the whole foolish lake," said Dodo, pulling in her line only to find that the bait was gone.

Charlie looked from one to the other of the girls, gave a hitch to his trousers and put his hand in his pocket.

"Guess I'll have a cig," he said, importantly, and pulled out a brand new package of cigarettes.

"Oh, Charlie, you never would. Why, you're only sixteen," cried Jane, aghast at the idea.

"Have to begin sometime," replied Charlie nonchalantly, "I would invite you girls to join me, but I don't approve of women smoking," he added with a lordly air.

"Bet you wouldn't do it before your Father," said Di in a matter-of-fact tone.

"I should say not," Charlie admitted honestly, "but fathers never understand boys and—no, I shouldn't say that."

"I should say you shouldn't," exclaimed Tony. "Father understands us all right and you know it." Tony was just a little cross that he hadn't thought of the cigarettes first.

"Well, when it comes to smoking, you wouldn't dare before Father, either," Charlie insisted.

"Bet I would," said Tony, "only he'd say I wasn't old enough."

"I don't think you ought to smoke unless your father says you may," said Dodo frankly. "Why don't you ask him?"

"All right, I will," Charlie declared and he started the boat's engine.

"Where are we going?" demanded Di, "just as I was about to catch the fish of the year, too. Charlie, you are a pest, you and your smokes."

"It does seem foolish," agreed Jane, "your Father will just say 'no' and we'll have had our fishing interrupted for nothing."

"I betcha Dad says he can go ahead. Now you see if he doesn't," said Tony.

Charlie steered the boat up to the entrance of the little brook that fed it and came upon his father reading a book, a fishing pole held lightly in one hand.

"Father," said Charlie, looking at him rather shyly.

His father looked up and knew in an instant that something was wrong. Charlie's face looked determined and he had called him Father.

"What the dickens do you kids want to come around and spoil my fishing for?" he asked, laughing good-naturedly. "Must be something awfully important. Well, let's have it."

"It—it's only this, sir," Charlie began. "You see, I wanted to smoke and the rest of them said I ought not to without your permission, and Tony said you'd let me, sir, but I don't think you will," he ended lamely.

Mr. Mettam scratched his head; then he smiled. He had a jolly smile, Di noticed.

"It all depends on what you want to smoke," he said seriously.

Charlie held up his package of cigarettes and his father shook his head.

"No, my boy, you are too young for those, but I'll let you smoke my pipe." He took the pipe out of his pocket and filled it slowly. When it was nicely packed, he lit it and, when it was drawing nicely, he handed it down into the boat to Charlie.

Now Charlie had dreamed of smoking a pipe all his life, but he didn't want to show his eagerness, so he took it casually enough and put it in his mouth. They should see he wasn't afraid of it. He drew a long breath and started coughing horribly.

"Never mind, that happens to us all," said his father kindly. "Try it again, and this time don't take such a long breath."

Charlie tried and much to his satisfaction the smoke came out through his nose.

"Now again," said Mr. Mettam.

Charlie did it again and again. To himself he thought:

"Smoking is not as wonderful as I thought

it was going to be. 'This makes my mouth taste funny, but I mustn't let on.'

He smoked on in silence, the rest watching him. Then it happened—all of a sudden.

Charlie was desperately seasick! The rocking of the motor boat and the strong fumes from the old pipe, that would have knocked out many an older and seasoned smoker, were too much for him.

In silence he handed the pipe back to his father, his face the color of a beet.

"I get you, Dad," was all he said and motioned to Tony to tune up the engine.

Mr. Mettam laughed heartlessly. "Let that be a lesson to you, my boy, and stay away from the smokes until you have cut your wisdom teeth." Then to soften the words, he added, "Tell you what I'll do: on your eighteenth birthday, or I guess we'd better make it your twenty-first, I'll give you a nice new pipe and a jar of tobacco, and you'll learn how to smoke by degrees but leave them alone for the present. Cigarettes would have been lots worse for you than my old pipe, so don't try those either. Now run along with you, and if you'll take my advice,

you'll go in for a swim," and Mr. Mettam turned back to his detective yarn that he was reading and waved the children away.

"Told you so," said Tony quietly, as they sped for the other end of the lake.

"Oh," groaned Charlie, "I suppose this will be all over the lake by this time tomorrow. I suppose it's asking too much of you 'told-you-sos' to keep still about this."

"Why, Charlie, I wouldn't breathe a word about it if you were to cut out my tongue," exclaimed Jane, "not even to Buddie when he comes this afternoon."

Di held out her hand, "You can trust Dodo and me, old boy," she said.

"Yes," agreed Dodo, "it's almost too good to keep from Alice but I won't tell—I won't, on my honor."

Tony slapped Charlie on the back, "I won't tell, either," he said, "but in future don't bet with your little brother."

They made the Happy-Go-Lucky landing just as Judy came up with the mail and they all stood around her while she distributed several letters.

"The twins get most of them, *as usual*," she said as she handed a batch of letters to Janet and one to Phyllis.

"Here's one for Debby from Lorry, but I suppose she's off fishing with Archie. You keep it, Alice. There's one for you from Lorry, too, and a card each for Dodo and Di.

"*Nossing* for me?" asked Little Thing and Deedee looked up inquiringly, too.

"Not today, sweethearts," said Judy, "you both got cards yesterday. Don't you remember?"

They settled down in silence to read their letters and Judy walked off towards the barn alone.

"Jan, listen! I've a most mysterious letter from Auntie Mogs. Do stop a minute and let me read it to you," Phyllis held up the letter in her hand.

"She says:

DEAREST CHILD:

I think you had better come home as English and Peter have taken on a responsibility that is really yours. Nan and I have done all we could to help, but you really must return and do your part. Don't

tell the boys I have written you, for they want it to be a grand surprise.

Your devoted

AUNTIE MOGS.

"And I got just such a one from Nan. Here it is," and Janet began to read.

JANET DEAR:

On receipt of this letter, come home at once. Things are brewing and they need the twins to straighten them out. Don't delay but start packing at once!

Yours and Peter's

NAN.

"My Aunt Jane's poll parrot," exclaimed Alice, "I never heard anything more mysterious, but oh, twins, I hate to have you go."

"Come on, let's pack. I wish there was an airship to take us home, but, Alice, it is awful leaving you," sighed Janet.

"What under the sun can it all be about?" demanded Phyllis. "I wonder where Judy is; we must tell her."

But Judy at that moment was miles away. She was sitting on the feed box, Juno's head in her lap, and she was deep in a letter from Harry Waters.

CHAPTER XIX

THE SURPRISE

THE train drew into Old Chester and Phyllis and Janet craned their necks to see if the station was still there. They were expecting almost anything from a cyclone to a blizzard, but everything looked just as peaceful as always.

Peter and English were there to meet them and they looked as cheerful as ever, nor could they notice any signs of worry about their faces.

“What under the sun can it be?” Janet queried for the fiftieth time that day.

“Well, darling, it’s awfully good to have you back,” said Peter in her ear.

English whispered, “Dear old lady,” to Phyllis, and she knew he meant the same thing.

They rode up the hill in the car and not a word of the mystery was even hinted at.

They stopped at Helen’s to see how Sonya

and Hester were and nothing was said there. They found the children up and around and Sonya proudly showed them a Noah's Ark that Ivan had made. It was all wrapped up in paper and they were not playing with it which seemed strange.

"Shall we stop and see Auntie Mogs before we go home, or will they be coming over for dinner?" asked Phyllis, almost beside herself with curiosity.

"No, they are not coming until tomorrow night," Peter replied. "I told them we would run you over there after dinner just to say 'hello' if you're not too tired."

"Oh, no, we are not too tired," exclaimed Janet. "We simply must see them tonight."

"Why the hurry?" asked English.

"Oh, just devotion and a desire to tell them all the camp gossip," replied Janet, looking at him hard.

They reached home, where Katie met them in disapproving silence and took their bags upstairs to their rooms. Janet and Peter disappeared into the Enchanted Kingdom to say really "how do you do" to each other, and

Phyllis and English went to their own special snugery on the second floor.

Dinner was served almost immediately after their arrival and not a thing was said during the meal to rouse their suspicions in any way, so that by the time it was over they were both very nearly frantic.

They went out on the terrace for a few minutes. Peter stood with his arm around Janet and English had his hand on Phyllis's shoulder. Suddenly Janet stood up straight and pointed down the hill.

"Look," she said, "there's a light in the gardener's cottage. Who can be there at this time of night?"

The gardener's cottage was a small house on the edge of the estate, and had once been lived in by Ivan when he first came to Old Chester and before he had married Helen. It had been closed up since he had gone away and it was unusual to see a light in it.

"Do you suppose some tramp has gotten in?" asked Phyllis.

"Let's go and find out," said the boys together.

They drove down the hill in the car and Peter jumped out and opened the gate that led to a pathway up to the front steps of the pretty little house.

The girls followed him curiously. It was queer in the first place for him to allow them to get out of the car when he expected to find a tramp inside the cottage. In fact, it was not to be thought of, so they decided that he knew the occupant.

Janet had just made up her mind that Auntie Mogs's house had burned down and that they were living in this one until it could be rebuilt. But why be so mysterious about it?

The door swung open and there stood Trooper O'Hara and behind him little Tim.

"Sure and you're welcome, indeed," he said stretching out a long strong hand to each of the girls, "and what do you think of my new quarters?"

Janet stood staring at O'Hara and Phyllis was hugging Tim.

"What do you think of it as a surprise?" asked English.

"Oh, it's too good to be true," cried Phyllis.

"Now we can take care of Tim and see him every day."

"How did you ever manage to do it?" asked Janet.

"Well, now you know," said Peter grandly, "it's hard to stump English and me when it comes to settling a knotty question. We just put our minds to bear on it and this is the solution. Great protection for us, too, having a trooper on the grounds."

"None of that, sir, if you please," said O'Hara. "The benefit is all mine, and as for Tim here, well, the cat's just got his tongue."

"I'm too excited to think of anything to say," said Tim, "but I'm feeling all the time and it's the very nicest feeling I have ever had."

O'Hara led the way back to the small but cozy sitting room with its cheery wall paper and bright chintzes and wicker furniture, and the girls saw the hand of Auntie Mogs and Nan.

"No wonder they wanted us home," thought Janet to herself.

With a great show of pride O'Hara led them through the house and showed them the bedrooms and the immaculate kitchen.

"Now there's just one thing," he said as he completed the tour. "Your aunts want me to get in a nurse at their expense to take care of Tim during the day, but I just can't accept any more at your hands and that's positive, but Miss Helen has solved my troubles for me, and it's an angel she is. There's a very nice lame boy that goes to her school, a fine lad he is, too, and he'll come afternoons to play with Tim and stay with him nights when I have to be away, and I can well afford him with a house rent free."

"Man, I like your spirit," said English, "and I guess the Miss Doubles as you call them will manage to get down most mornings."

"Of course we will," promised Phyllis, and Janet squeezed Tim's little hand.

"Come along now, we have to get over to Nan's," said Peter, "and I know it is time somebody went to bed."

They said good night and promised to be down bright and early the next day.

"And will you read to me maybe?" asked Tim as they went down the front steps.

"All about Robin Hood," Janet called back over her shoulder.

"Well, we did our best," said Nan when they were settled around the coffee table in the lovely old house. The surf was thudding below them and the night air brought in the scents of the garden and the pleasant smell of freshly cut grass.

"We couldn't have improved on it," laughed Phyllis, "but you might have left us something to do."

"The man is so stubborn about the nurse. I know a splendid woman, but he won't hear of it. Of course, she comes high, but Mogs and I would be glad to give that comfort to that darling, wistful-eyed child." Nan spoke as though she were exasperated.

"We like his pride," said Peter, who was apt to use the double pronoun when speaking of English, exactly the way the twins did when speaking of themselves.

"I have no use for pride when it affects another person," said the gentle Auntie Mogs with decision.

"Maybe," said Janet wisely, "O'Hara wants Tim to grow up dependent only on his own resources."

"And I think that's rather fine," Phyllis added for her.

"It's all very well," said Nan, "but when it comes to medical treatment I intend to have my own way. I don't believe that child need be a cripple, and I intend to interview a well-known surgeon on the subject, and if he says something can be done, I'll kidnap Tim. See if I don't."

A sudden banging on the door interrupted their argument and Nan went to open it. It was one of the boys from the village drug store and he came in looking pale and excited.

"Please, ma'am, go straight to the parsonage. Mrs. Blake is very ill and is asking for you. She sent to the store for some medicine and when I took it 'round, she sent for me to come into her room and whispered to me to get you quick. It's a heart attack and the doctor says she is——"

"Stuff and nonsense," said Nan, crossly. "She was here yesterday; she can't die. Come, Mogs. Peter, drive us down at once."

But Mrs. Blake was going to die. Both her daughters were away and Dr. Blake was out

making calls on his parishioners. Nan and Auntie Mogs went into the room and the door was closed behind them. The boys sat out in the car and Janet and Phyllis went in to the sitting room where Mrs. Waters and Harry sat, looking very much frightened.

"There seems nothing I can do," said Mrs. Waters sadly. "I'd have telephoned for your aunts if she had only told me she wanted them but she didn't. Sent that boy instead."

"I can think of something to do," said Janet briskly. "Harry, you go out to the boys and go with them and find Dr. Blake and don't come home till you do."

"All right, Jan," said Harry, who was used to obeying Janet's commands.

After he had gone they just waited. Nan came in at last, her eyes were very red and she spoke in a hushed voice.

"Phyllis," she said, "you and Janet go and wire the Blake girls. They are on Long Island; here's the address."

"How is she?" asked Mrs. Waters.

"She's all right now," said Nan shakily, "she died five minutes ago."

Dr. Blake came rushing in and Nan had to break it to him as gently as she could.

"She sent for me because she wanted Mogs and me to do something for her," she said. "She made me promise to tell you before you went upstairs." Nan hesitated, and then she said firmly:

"Doctor, it was your wife who set fire to the gas station."

CHAPTER XX

TIM'S PARTY

THINK of Mrs. Blake having the courage to go out and set that station on fire," said Phyllis the next morning. "I do feel sorry for Dr. Blake; don't you?"

Janet was pressing out a black crêpe de chine dress that she was going to wear at the funeral, and Phyllis was taking off the yellow band on a floppy black hat, for Auntie Mogs had decided they should wear their darkest clothes today. Mrs. Blake had been such a good friend of hers and Nan's.

"Do you suppose there is anything we could do for Alice and Mildred?" asked Janet.

"I think we might go down and inquire," Phyllis replied. "It will be after the funeral that they'll need us. Jan, I wish we had been nicer to the Blakes."

"I know, but they were always so mean to me

and somehow they never needed us. Still it would be easier if we had been really better friends."

They worked on in silence for a few minutes, and then Phyllis said:

"We might bring the girls up to see Tim this afternoon. You know, he'd cheer up anybody and I think——"

The telephone rang and she broke off to answer it.

It was Nan and she was greatly excited. The big doctor from Boston had telephoned her that he was coming through Old Chester that afternoon and that he would stop and see Tim if she could arrange it.

"Will you see that stubborn father of his and make him say 'yes'?" she ended.

"Of course, I will," promised Phyllis. "That is, I'll back up Jan when she asks him and I'll telephone you right away."

She turned from the table and called out to Janet, "Come on, Jan. We've just got time to catch O'Hara before he goes out. Nan wants her doctor to see Tim today."

Janet finished her pressing in a hurry and,

catching up a big hat, she followed Phyllis out of the door and down to the gardener's cottage where they found O'Hara just mounting his horse.

"Good morning," said Janet sternly. "I want a word with you."

"Sure, as many as you like, Mrs. Gibbs."

"It's about Tim," Janet began. "Nan has a doctor friend, who is a very famous surgeon, and he is coming through Old Chester today and wants to see Tim. He might be able to do something for the boy and you simply must let him examine the little fellow."

"Must is a hard word for me to swallow," said O'Hara slowly, "yet I'll take it from you. You make me flounder in a sea of indebtedness that I'll never get out of," he went on.

"But, Mr. O'Hara," said Phyllis gently, "surely there can be no thought of indebtedness where Tim is concerned. You must remember we are doing it for Tim and not for you."

"Entirely right you are," said O'Hara. "You do love the boy; don't you?" and he looked from one to the other.

"Anyway," laughed Janet to relieve the ten-

sion, "Nan is determined and once she makes up her mind, I wouldn't put it past her to kidnap Tim."

O'Hara laughed a big, hearty chuckle, and held out both hands. The twins took them in a firm handshake.

"And now I must be off!" exclaimed O'Hara. "It's my job I must keep, for Tim would have no use for me if I wasn't a trooper."

The girls went into the house to say 'hello' to Tim, and found him puzzling over his school-books. Helen came every afternoon to teach him and Ivan came over with her sometimes and coached him in languages, in which Tim was particularly apt.

Phyllis helped him in some of the hard words in his reader, and then they walked on back up the hill.

Several of the school children were waiting on the porch and Katie was haranguing them about their muddy boots.

"Hello, youngsters," greeted Janet. "What can we do for you?"

"Please, Miss Janet, we're a dela-dela-gation," said Bobbie Day.

"Well, come right inside," said Janet. "We always receive dela-dela-gations with cookies and lemonade."

Phyllis opened the screen door and the children flocked in. Katie went off grumbling to the kitchen to prepare the lemonade.

"And now, what is it?" demanded Janet.

"Please, Miss Janet, we want to have a surprise party for Tim," Bobbie began.

"We didn't think of it ourselves," interrupted Jummy Wilson. "We can't tell you who did that."

"Keep still, Jummy. I was coming to that later. Who's chief of this band, anyway?" demanded Bobbie.

"Oh, you are, 'cause you voted for yourself," said Jummy crossly.

"Here, here, dela-dela-gations never scrap, protested Phyllis.

"What about the surprise party?" asked Janet. "I think it's a wonderful idea."

"Well, we each got a present for him and we want to go in a bunch—body, I mean, to give them to him and we'd like you to go with us." Bobbie looked from one to the other of the twins.

He wasn't a bit sure which one he was talking to.

"Splendid!" exclaimed Phyllis. "And when do you want to go?"

"This afternoon after Mrs. Blake's funeral. We're all going to that, and we thought it would make us kinda sad 'cause we all loved Mrs. Blake, you know, and anyway, we thought to-day would be a good day to have the surprise party." He looked up expectantly into Janet's face.

"Let's see; the funeral is at twelve o'clock, and we'll be back by one, and the doctor doesn't come before four," said Janet. "I think this afternoon would be a good time for your party."

"It will keep Tim's mind off the doctor," said Phyllis.

"What's going to be the surprise in the surprise party?" asked Janet.

"The presents we got for him. Gee, they are swell!" exclaimed Bobbie.

"Of course, how stupid of me," laughed Janet. "And now here comes the lemonade."

The "delegation" left greatly refreshed and Janet and Phyllis turned to look at each other.

"The darlings!" said Phyllis.

"Who do you suppose thought up the plan?" demanded Janet.

"I'll bet it was Sonya," laughed Phyllis.

"It would be just exactly like her," answered Janet.

"How about a freezer of ice cream for the party?" suggested Phyllis.

"And a batch of cookies."

"Katie will have a fit, but what of it?" and Phyllis went into the house to give the orders.

Katie did have a fit. She insisted that Janet and Phyllis were spoiling the children of the village, and insisted that their mothers would not thank them for it.

"Nevertheless we will have a freezer of ice cream and a batch of cookies," said Phyllis with determination.

The boys came home in time to dress for the funeral and they were both very much excited over the twin lambs that had been born that morning.

"When they are two or three days old, I'm going to take them down to see Tim," declared English.

"If the doctor would only make him so he

could run around, what a help he could be with the sheep and how he would like herding them," said Peter.

The funeral was a very sad affair. Every one felt the loss of Mrs. Blake keenly and they knew now how much she loved the village of Old Chester.

Nan and Auntie Mogs and Mrs. Waters stood beside the Blake girls and Harry had his arm through Dr. Blake's. Another clergyman from a neighboring town had come over to read the services.

She was buried in the little cemetery beside the church.

After the service Janet and Phyllis went up and asked Alice and Mildred if they wanted to come to Tim's surprise party, but the girls thought they ought to stay with their father. Harry Waters came along to help out and would have bought out the general store of toys had not the girls forbidden it.

"You see," said Phyllis, "the gifts that the children are bringing are probably homemade and yours might outshine them."

"Righto," said English. "Let this be the

children's party. We grown-ups can just look on."

"Oh, are you going, too?" asked Phyllis.

"Of course, I am," English replied. "I wouldn't miss it for a farm. Anyway, Sonya told me all about it this morning."

"She did!" exclaimed Janet. "I knew she was at the bottom of it."

"Well, let's start," said Peter, and he piled his car full of children and set off at a snail's pace up the hill to keep abreast of those that had to walk.

When they reached the gardener's cottage, Janet tapped on the door and was greeted by the usual cheery "come in" from Tim.

"Tim, I've a great surprise for you," she said as he rose painfully to his feet to give her his welcome.

"I know, another doctor," he said wearily.

"Oh, no, darling. The doctor is coming later this afternoon. This is a better surprise," and she walked to the door and beckoned the children in.

Bobbie and Sonya led the procession and it was all very solemn. Sonya made a deep bow

and presented Tim with the Noah's Ark that Ivan had made.

Bobbie bowed next and said "here," and shoved a bow and arrow into Tim's eager hand. Jummy came next with a bean shooter, and Limpy slapped Tim on the back and gave him a set of checkers he had made himself out of a bit of wood.

The girls brought handkerchiefs, and Hester produced a bib that she had embroidered all by herself, and Tim never turned an eyelash as he accepted it.

"Now, Tim," said Bobbie, taking charge again, "you've got to make a speech."

"Thanking us, you know," put in Sonya.

Tim stood up as straight as his brace would allow him to and first of all he saluted, then he bowed and began:

"Ladies and gentlemen," he said. "When people give you things one at a time, you can most generally say thank you, but when they give you all these swell things at once, you just can't say it loud enough. I wish my dad were here to help me out, he'd know what to say. All I can think of is that I wish I was able to go

out and play with you. Gee, what a swell time we'd have and—and—I think it's swell of you to bother so much for a lame boy. Thank you, all of you, for the swell presents!"

"I think that's a swell speech, don't you, Miss Phyllis?" asked Limpy, who was very proud of his charge.

Tim showed them his electric trains and his singing top and his books and they led him to the door where he shot his bow and arrow and his bean shooter under Bobbie's directions.

Then came the ice cream and cookies which were as much of a surprise to the children as they were to Tim.

They were all sitting on the floor eating away for dear life when Nan walked in with a tall, lean man with stooped shoulders. Janet and Phyllis hustled the children out and Peter and English took them away to see the twin lambs. Tim was introduced to the doctor.

Very gently he took off the brace and with long, experienced fingers, he made his examination. Tim never complained once.

When it was all over the big man turned to the boy and asked shortly:

"How would you like to run around and play with the other fellows and only have to limp a little bit?"

"Gee, doctor, that would be swell!" said Tim, but there was little belief in his voice. He had been promised so much by so many doctors.

"Well, we'll see," said the big man, who's name was Farrell. "First of all, you must come down and visit me in my hospital. You'll like that; there will be lots of boys to talk to there."

Tim nodded eagerly and Dr. Farrell turned to Nan.

"I see no reason why we can't have him on his feet within six weeks," he said.

"I knew you'd do it," said Nan, and Auntie Mogs wiped away a tear.

Tim heard them wonderingly, and something like hope sprang up in his heart. Somehow he had confidence in this man, in spite of all the promises that had gone wrong. His mind flew to thoughts of running on the green grass and a little shiver ran down his spine.

"I wish my dad would come home," he said at last and they all knew that he wanted to share this newborn hope with his best pal.

CHAPTER XXI

HARRY'S REQUEST

JANET and Phyllis were busy with their packing. It was the day before they were to start for Long Island to go to the wedding of Sally and Daphne.

Mrs. Blake's confession had been a seven-days' wonder to the little town but had died down, and Dr. Blake, with the aid of his two daughters, was beginning to hold up his head once more.

Tim and Limpy Muldoon were the best of friends and the companionship was doing a lot for both boys. The twins went to see Tim almost every morning and Nan and Auntie Mogs were frequent visitors.

Hester and Sonya were all over the measles and were often to be found playing house with Tim and Limpy. Just at present they were de-

lighted at the thought of being flower girls at the double wedding.

"It seems to me that I have lived in a suitcase all this summer," said Janet.

"I know. We certainly have been on the wing, haven't we?" agreed Phyllis.

"And today came a long letter from Daisy demanding to know when we were coming to Arizona again." Janet paused in her packing. "I'd love to go down there if the boys could only go, but I don't want to leave them again for a while, do you?"

"I do not," Phyllis said decidedly. "That's the reason I didn't want to go to this wedding any earlier, before the boys could go with us, I mean."

"Won't it be fun traveling down with the crowd?" asked Janet.

"Yes, and I'm so glad the boys insisted on Ivan's going. He sticks so closely to those silly sheep."

"There'll be three cars of us, won't there? Ivan and Helen are going down with Mogs and Nan and the babies in the big car, and the Westlakes are going to squeeze in theirs."

"You forgot that Lorry and Jimmy are coming over to start with us and that makes four cars," reminded Phyllis.

Katie interrupted them at this point by knocking on the door.

"Come in," called Janet.

Katie entered, looking as glum as usual.

"That Harry Waters is downstairs and he wants to see you both," she announced, "though what he's a-doing to be calling at this time of the morning I'm sure I can't tell you."

"You don't need to, Katie," said Janet severely. "Tell Mr. Waters we will be right down."

"Humph," snorted Katie, "Mr. Waters, indeed, and me knowing him since he was in swaddling clothes and a homelier baby I never saw."

"That will do, Katie," said Phyllis, and she said it as though she meant it.

Katie disappeared, but they heard her mumbling to herself all the way downstairs.

"Katie's getting impossible, but what can we do?" demanded Phyllis. "It wouldn't do any good to discharge her, she simply would refuse to go."

"Don't worry about her. I'll get Nan to talk to her. She still thinks she's our nurse, you know," and Janet put a dab of powder on the tip of her saucy nose.

Harry was waiting for them in the Enchanted Kingdom. He jumped up from his chair as they came in.

"Hello, Twins," he greeted them, "I've come to ask you to do me a great favor. Mother won't help me out, so I've come to you."

"I've always felt maternal towards you," laughed Janet.

"And I've always felt sisterly, so between the two of us we ought to be able to do it for you, whatever it is," added Phyllis.

"I know I'm not giving you much time but I think you can make it." It seemed impossible for Harry to get to the point.

"Tell us what it is, Harry, or I'll shake you," said Janet.

"You always did rush a fellow, Jan," said Harry. "Well, here it is: I want you to ask Judy down to go with you, and then I can take her down to the wedding. You know Daphne said she wouldn't get married without me and

Chuck has asked me to be one of the ushers, and Sally said I had to come too."

"That's all perfectly all right, but why under the sun didn't you tell us sooner? How can we get Judy down here in time to leave tomorrow?"

"Oh, I have that all planned out," said Harry. "I can meet the train she is on at the junction and bring her here. I'll have to get up at four o'clock to make it, but I don't care."

Judy was at camp with her aunt and uncle. The Westlakes had returned home, and she was expecting to go down to the wedding alone, for she was to be one of the bridesmaids.

"Well, of course, we'll ask her. We'd better telephone. Put the call through now and tell central we want a good connection," said Phyllis.

In a half hour's time the call was through and Judy herself answered the telephone.

"But I can't come," she said in response to Janet's invitation. "Nat is visiting me and Jim is at the other end of the lake. We were all going down together." There was a little pause, and then she added: "Unless you ask them, too. Oh, please do, Jan."

"But of course I shall," laughed Janet, "and

can't you plan to come back with us after the wedding and stay a week? Harry is standing on one foot and then the other and he says to make you say 'yes.' ”

“Whoopee,” came Judy's delighted voice over the wire, and then central broke in to say that the time was up.

“Then Harry will meet you at the junction and we'll see you here.”

Harry was so excited, it is a question whether or not he got any sleep that night. At any rate, three o'clock saw him getting the car out. His mother was up, too, to get him his breakfast, which she served to him in disapproving silence, that in no way dampened Harry's excitement.

He met the train, having waited an hour for it, and three sleepy people jumped off and greeted him with yawns.

He started back for Old Chester very proud of the fact that Judy was in the seat beside him.

The cavalcade of cars started off, the twins leading, and nothing of importance happened until they reached Quong at six o'clock that night.

The Hillis and the Ladd bungalows stood right on the sand dunes and at high tide you could throw a pebble into the ocean, which thudded and beat upon the shore not fifty paces away.

Nan and Auntie Mogs were to stay in the cottages, Nan with Mrs. Ladd and Auntie Mogs with Mrs. Hillis. The rest of the party was to occupy a floor in the Inn, an old-fashioned building that had once been a posthouse. Sally and Daphne went over with them to find their rooms.

On the way back to the Inn, which stood on the main road, they passed a little church all covered in ivy.

"That's where the great deed is to take place if Daphne doesn't back out before then," said Sally, and Janet thought she sounded worried.

"Oh, I suppose I'll go through with it," said Daphne gloomily, "though I expect Chuck and I will separate in less than a year."

"Why, Daphne Hillis," exclaimed Janet, "I don't think that's a nice way to talk. If you do do anything so silly, it will be your fault and not Chuck's, for a more patient man I never saw."

"Oh, Taffy doesn't really mean it," said Sally. "She's just talking to hear herself talk."

"She's right. I know I'm not worth Chuck's little finger," said Daphne humbly. "Let's talk about something else."

There was little time for conversation, for they had to hurry to dress, hurry through dinner, and hurry to the dance at the club.

Sally and Daphne seemed to be the most popular of the younger set, and all evening they were bringing up boys and girls to be introduced to their Old Chester friends.

Towards the middle of the evening the Mettams arrived and so did the Langs, so that the party was complete.

It was an ordinary dance, but everybody said they had more fun at it than is usual at dances.

One of Sally's friends, a Nancy Black, said during the evening:

"I never saw our crowd have a better time. Sall, I'll never forgive you for not introducing me to those bully twins and the beautiful Westlakes before."

"Told you you'd like them," replied Sally, just as Quentin came up to claim the next dance.

Towards the end of the evening, Janet missed Judy and Harry and she and Peter went off to look for them. They hunted in the parked cars in the roadway before the club and they looked in the smoking room, but there was no sign of them anywhere.

"Wonder where this door leads to?" said Peter pushing open a door which led from the hallway.

Judy and Harry were discovered. A flight of stairs led up to the second floor, and sitting, one on one side and one on the other were Judy and Harry, and they were both fast asleep.

CHAPTER XXII

THE WEDDING

A DAY of drenching rain greeted them on the morning of the wedding.

"The skies are crying because Taffy is getting married," said English poetically.

"Well, they needn't rain on me, too," said Sally, looking out of the window at the dismal day.

They were all at breakfast at the Ladds' and everyone's spirit was slightly dampened.

"Rain before seven, clear before eleven," said Peter optimistically.

"Clear," exclaimed Sally, "why there isn't a chance of its clearing for days. We'll spend our honeymoon in the rain."

"We must make our own sunshine," said Quentin too sweetly, and Sally glared at him.

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Presents had been coming all day and towards the middle of the morning the twins' gift arrived.

"Oh, what can it be?" exclaimed Sally, as she took the small package from Dodo, who had been running back and forth all morning on errands.

"I know it is something original," said Daphne.

They opened their boxes in silence and drew out the little bracelets with the letters of the word friendship joined together with little links. It was a unique gift and Sally and Daphne knew that a world of love had gone into the choosing of it.

"Oh, Twins," cried Sally, and the tears came to her eyes.

"Here, you mustn't do that, on your wedding day," laughed Janet.

"Oh, why couldn't we have thought of something like that for your wedding," moaned Daphne, as she kissed them both heartily.

"Never mind; the twins are having an anniversary soon, and we can be copy cats then and give them bracelets just like ours," said Sally.

“Oh, that will be great,” said the twins.
“Then we’ll all have them alike.”

They went back into the church to see what progress had been made, and found that Alice and Helen and Debby had banked the altar high with roses and made a curtain of smilax and the buds.

Long, broad, white ribbons shut in the pews on either side of the aisle and made a path for the brides to walk down. The wedding was to be at high noon and by half-past ten Mrs. Ladd and Mrs. Hillis began thinking about dressing the brides.

They were to be conventional brides and their dresses were made of white satin, only it wasn’t dead white, it was a sort of ivory that blended in with the old lace veils that had been their mothers’.

The bridesmaids were in pastel shades, of blue and pink, yellow and green, deepening into the deeper shades of green and rose.

The twins were to be the matrons of honor and Phyllis was to wear blue, and Janet, pink. The dresses were cut high at the waist with small puff sleeves, and a square neck with a narrow

sash that tied at the side with a cluster of roses. Their hats were old-fashioned bonnets with a wreath of flowers next the hair.

Dodo and Di led the bridesmaids, their dresses ankle length, and they were wearing white satin slippers. They were followed by Lorry and Debby, who, in turn, were followed by Alice and Helen.

Before the brides, carrying baskets of roses and lilies of the valley, walked Deedee and Little Thing and Sonya and Hester.

Nan and Auntie Mogs were busy helping the girls dress and every minute or two some one would walk to the window to inspect the weather and comment upon it.

"What a shame we can't walk to church," said Helen. "We'll spoil our dresses in the motors."

"Drat this rain anyway," complained Alice. "Little Thing, are you sure you know what to do about scattering the roses before the brides?"

"Oh, yes, Aunt Alice, she knows all about it. Hester and I have been training them all morning," said Sonya, who felt her responsibility keenly.

A knock sounded at the door and Peter called, "Hurry up, the brides have started."

There followed a grand scurry to the waiting automobiles.

The ushers were Grant Weeks and Harry Waters, Ivan and Jimmy, Jim Andrews and Archie Lang, and the best men were Peter for Chuck and English for Quentin.

Chuck had asked Eustace Blake to be an usher but the poor boy had said he simply couldn't bear to see Sally in a wedding veil if he wasn't beside her. He was not even coming to the wedding.

All the cars met at the church door and there was quite a congestion in the little lane.

The boys went off to do their ushering, for the train from New York was in and they were busy seating the guests.

They looked very fine in their blue serge coats and white flannel trousers, and each wore a rose in his buttonhole.

At last the organ struck up the wedding march, Chuck and Quentin came in through the vestry door followed by Peter and English. Then came the brides, each on her father's arm,

followed by Janet and Phyllis holding adorable old-fashioned bouquets.

The four children had gone on ahead and the strenuous work they made of throwing the roses caused a murmur in the congregation.

When they reached the chancel steps, they did something that no one had even suggested. Little Thing led it and the rest followed suit. They all turned, looked at the people before them and made deep, bobbing courtesies.

"I'll bet Sonya is at the bottom of that," whispered Helen.

The relief on Chuck's face when he saw Daphne really coming towards him was almost comical, and he himself would have admitted his surprise, for never since the beginning of his courtship had he ever really believed that he would win the lovely Taffy.

The impressive words made them man and wife and Daphne promised to honor and obey without a hesitation in her lovely voice.

The wedding was over and the reception began at the club. After they had congratulated the brides, the guests paired off in couples and went to inspect the refreshments.

CHAPTER XXIII

CONCLUSION

HOME again and the twins settled down to a long rest.

"There's always Tim to think about," began Janet, as they sat on the terrace one cool autumn day.

"And there's Judy and Harry Waters," reminded Phyllis.

"Oh, dear, yes, and Jim and Nat, what darlings they all are, but I rather think in spite of them that the next adventure will be——"

"The Twins and Tim."

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